UNDER THE MANGO TREE

A CASE OF HOMICIDE IN AN AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL SOCIETY

ERIC VENBRUX

Cover illustration:

'The Mango Tree' (dreaming of the artist), gouache on paper, 108 x 76 cm

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een wetenschappelijke proeve
op het gebied van de Sociale Wetenschappen

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan
de Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen,
volgens besluit van het College van Decanen
in het openbaar te verdedigen op

dinsdag 1 juni 1993,
des namiddags te 1.30 uur precies

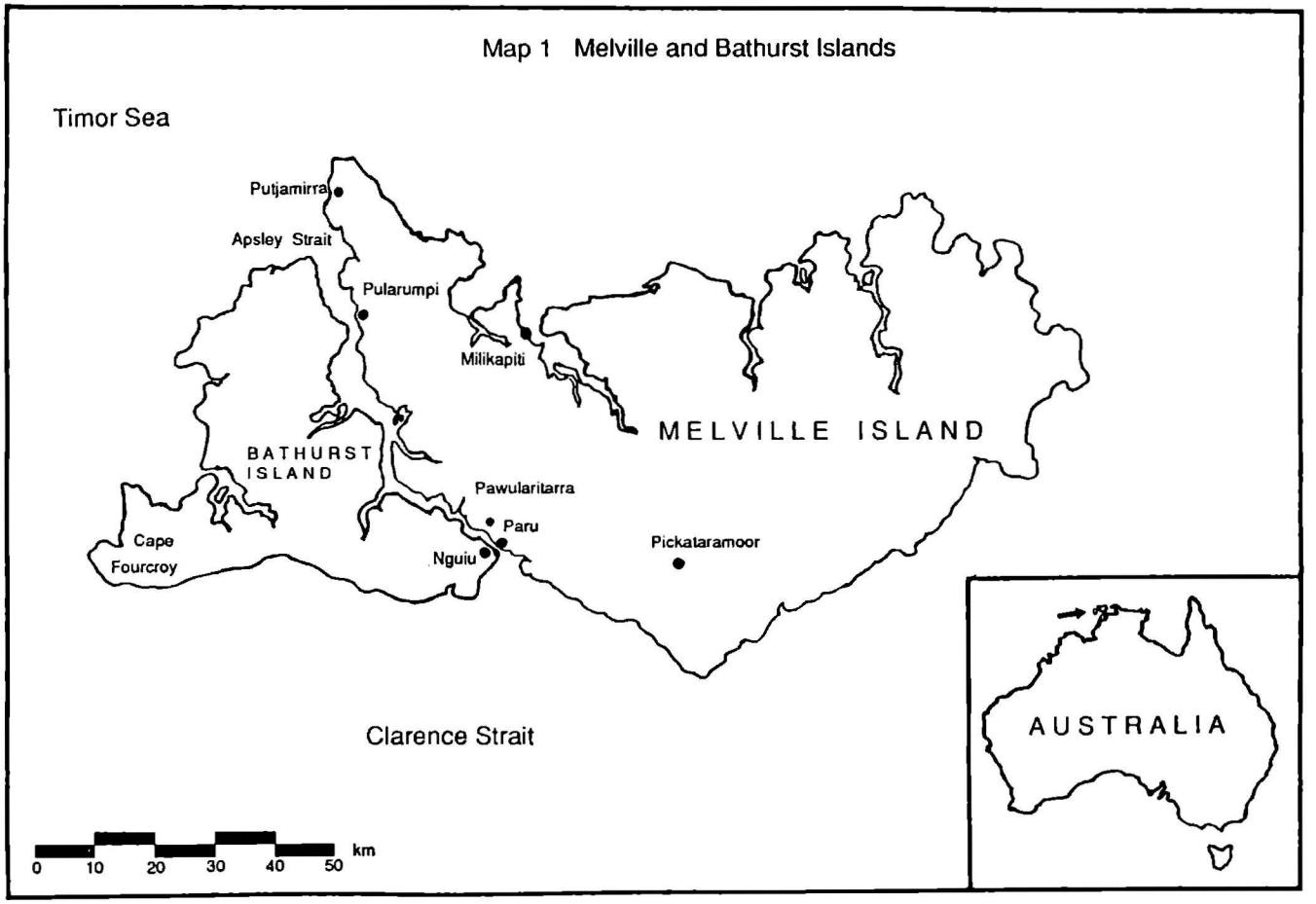
door

Henricus Joseph Maria Venbrux
geboren op 5 maart 1960 te Boxmeer

Promotor: Prof. Dr. A.A. Trouwborst
Co-promotor: Dr. A.P. Borsboom

Milireiatumau-punkaringini-tumunuwaluwamini

To the memory of *ngia ringani*


Map 1 Melville and Bathurst Islands
Timor Sea
Putjamirra
Apsley Strait
Pularumpi
Milikapiti
MELVILLE ISLAND
BATHURST ISLAND
Pawularitarra
Paru
Nguiu
Cape Fourcroy
Pickataramoor
Clarence Strait
0 10 20 30 40 50 km
AUSTRALIA

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work, based on fieldwork conducted on Melville and Bathurst Islands between September 1988 and November 1989, and in October and November 1991, would not have been possible without the institutions and persons whose invaluable assistance I want to acknowledge here.

My chief debt is to the Tiwi people from Melville and Bathurst Islands. I would like to express my gratitude to the delegates to the Tiwi Land Council for the trust they placed in my companion Jeanette Deenen and I, for the permission they granted me to attend land council meetings, and for the hospitality we received. Tiwi people - I had the privilege to spend almost sixteen months in their midst - have strongly impressed me with their self-confidence, their creativity, their warmth, their sense of humour and their respect for fellow human beings. Tiwi people made us feel most welcome. My warmest thanks go to all those fine people who 'looked after' Jeanette and I, gave us their good company, took us out on hunting trips, provided us with accomodation and transport, shared food and sleeping places with us, took pains to answer our unremitting questions, and expressed their sympathy in Tiwi fashion. Our stay on Melville and Bathurst Islands has enriched our lives enormously. To protect their privacy I have substituted pseudonyms for real names. The contribution of Tiwi individuals will show on the following pages: I am sure Tiwi people will be able to identify the persons whose names have been altered. Tiwi people have 'a lot of names'; that is, they are important people, and I hope I have not been impudent in adding these names. As we agreed, I will mention at least one Tiwi person here by her real name: Milireiatumau not only took me under her wings but also translated and interpreted the esoteric Tiwi songs for me. Her collaboration throughout has been invaluable. To the Tiwi man who was charged with murder by the police, and who in time became a good friend, I am indebted for his permission to cite the transcripts of the court proceedings. I am very proud of the work that the great Tiwi artist Fatima Kantilla painted for me in the Old Camp and am grafeful for her consent to have it reproduced on the cover of this book. I am also very grateful to the eldest daughter of the homicide victim for giving me permission and encouragement to write a book about her father, of whom she said, 'It's your father too!' The book is dedicated to the memory of this man with an outstanding personality.

Ad Borboom encouraged me to undertake a research project in Aboriginal Australia. Micheal Leigh first suggested I do research among the Tiwi. I was able to realise my plans while I was employed as a research student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Nijmegen. This research was further supported generously by the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (WOTRO), the Hague; and in addition by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), Canberra; and the Netherlands Foundation of Scientific Research (NWO), the Hague. Whereas I received my training in anthropology at the University of Nijmegen, I am intellectually indebted to my teachers, of whom I want to mention in particular Henk Driessen, Anton Blok, Albert Trouwborst, and Jan Pouwer. Albert Trouwborst and Ad Borsboom became my supervisors. I thank them wholeheartedly for their support, guidance, encouragement, and their comments on the many drafts of the various chapters.

In Australia I would like to thank the following institutions for their invaluable assistance: the Tiwi Land Council, the Pularumpi Community Government Council, the Roman Catholic Church on Melville and Bathurst Islands, the Northern Territory Police Force, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, the North Australia Research Unit, the Northern Australia Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, the Northern Territory State Reference Library, and the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at the Australian National University. The late Anthony Forge kindly provided me with a room and the facilities to work in his department between December 1989 and March 1990. My two stays to conduct library research in Canberra, between mid-July 1988 and mid-March 1990 and bracketing my fieldwork, proved the more fruitful because of the advice I received from many academics there. I cannot name them all, but I would like to single out Jon Altman, Ian Keen, Kingsley Palmer, Nicolas Peterson and Luke Taylor. I want to thank Kingsley Palmer, director of research of AIATSIS, also for his support of my research project. Nicolas Peterson allowed me to study the fieldnotes of C.W.M. Hart, who conducted fieldwork among the Tiwi in 1928-1929, that were in his possession: for this I am indebted to him. I am grateful for conversations with Jane Goodale and Arnold Pilling, Margaret Brandl and Gary Robinson, who conducted fieldwork previously on Melville and Bathurst Islands. For help and information I am also indebted to Celine Auton, Francesca Baas Becking, Gordon Bauman, David and Elaine Benson, Riky Breedveld, Peter and Thecla Brogan, Noel Coelho, Carol Cooper, Therese Fortier, Annie Franklin, Les Hiatt, John Hicks, Jan King, Micheal Leigh, David MacDougall, Marie McMahon, Toon van Meijl, Gary Grant Moseley, Peter Murphy, Susan Ostling, Ton and Pia Otto, John Pye, Cyril and Helena Rioli, David Ross, and Dick Wallace.

Besides by my supervisors, useful comments on draft chapters were provided by the members of Albert Trouwborst's 'promovendi-overleg', and by Ton Otto (chapters 1, 2, 4, 6, 7 and 8), Henk Driessen (chapters 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7), Jean Kommers (chapters 1 and 3) and Marjo Buitelaar (chapter 3). An earlier draft of chapter 7 was presented to the NICCOS Conference on the Politics of Ethnographic Reading and Writing (Plasmolen, December 12-13, 1991): I am grateful to the members of the conference for their comments. For their helpful comments I am also indebted to the examiners of my thesis; Professor Frans Hüsken (KUN, Nijmegen), Lex van der Leeden (UI, Jakarta) and Ian Keen (ANU, Canberra).

I thank Fred Melssen for helping me with the layout and Geurt Franzen for drawing the maps. I owe a special thank-you to Vallaurie Crawford of Hawaii, who not only improved my English but also provided many constructive comments. A very special thank-you must go to Jon Altman, director of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, for his unwavering support. No matter how tight his time schedules were, I could always rely on him: Jon assisted me and helped me in numerous ways throughout the research in Australia; he has also read the entire manuscript and provided very helpful comments. Léon Buskens, as always, encouraged me and gave me his moral support.

Jeanette Deenen, my life companion and co-worker in the field, lent her generous personality to this work. Her love and her faith in me, even when times were tough, kept me going. She gave birth to our son Justin, 'the little possum', who also cheered me up. That the book is finished is the biggest compliment I can make to her.

UNDER THE MANGO TREE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

A

AGATHA TAMPAJANI, wife of Steven; mother of Max and Harold; clan sister of Jerome and Jasmine.
ALAN PAMANTARI, a health worker; son of Bill.
ALEC ADRANANGO, half-brother of Nancy; and senior clan brother of Jasmine.
ANNA WANGITI; a widow; sister of Melanie; and lover of Mike.
ANDREW MUNULUKA, husband of Jasmine; and clan brother of Sally.
ARTHUR WANGITI, elder classificatory brother of Kevin.

B

BARRY PAMANTARI, son of Edmund.
BASIL MUNULUKA, son's son of Kantilla; and classificatory father of Tobias.
BETTY KERIMERINI, daughter of Bruce.
BILL PAMANTARI, brother of Simon, Mabel, Theodore and Mary; father of Alan; classificatory brother of Isaac, died in 1990.
BRENDA PAMANTARI, sister of Reuben; and daughter of Jerome.
BRUCE KERIMERINI, elder brother of Sam; father of Jim and Betty; and classificatory brother of Tobias; died in 1992.

C

CAROL, daughter of Kate; and stepdaughter of Tobias.
CECIL JATUKWANI, former husband of Tobias' half-sister Patty.
CHRISTEL PAMANTARI, daughter of Jerome.
CLAIRE ARAPI (†), youngest daughter of Gloria and Tobias, died in 1952.
CLAUDIA CALLEY, daughter of Maud and Lester; and granddaughter of Nancy and Sam.

D

DICK PAMANTARI, husband of Sally; elder brother of Jasmine and Rodney; stepson of Isaac; and 'prisoner's friend' of Kevin.
DIMITRI PAPURULUWI, senior clan brother of Jasmine.
DON WANGITI, classificatory brother of Kevin.
DONNA ARAPI (†), sister of Tobias.
DOROTHY KILIMIRIKA, sister and former co-wife of Marylou.

E

EDGAR TAPALINGA, senior man from Nguiu.
EDMUND PAMANTARI, classificatory brother of Bill, Mary, Theodore, Mabel, Simon, Isaac and Oscar; died in 1991.
ELLA IMALU, wife of Simon; mother of Mildred and Rolf; half-sister of Roger; died in 1989.
EMMY JONES, lover of Oscar.
ERIC VENBRUX, the author, 'son' of Nancy.
EVELYN ARAPI, youngest daughter of Kate and Tobias.

F

FANNY ARAPI (†), wife of Jacob.
GEOFFREY ADRANANGO, classificatory brother of Nancy; and friend and next door neighbour of Tobias.

G

GLADYS PAMANTARI, a health worker.
GLORIA PALURATI (†), first wife of Tobias; and mother of Laura; died in 1959.

H

HAROLD TAMPAJANI, son of Agatha and Steven; and classificatory son of Tobias.
HAZEL ARAPI (†), sister of Tobias.
HEATHER ARAPI, daughter of Kate and Tobias; sister of Ralph, Shirley and Evelyn; and half-sister of Laura, Ruth, Judy, and Carol.

I

ISAAC PAMANTARI, stepfather of Dick, Jasmine and Rodney; classificatory mother's brother of Tobias; died in 1992.

J

JACOB ARAPI (†), son of Minapini; brother of Tobias; speared by Tobias; died in 1976.
JACK MUNULUKA, brother of Mavis; and classificatory father of Tobias.
JANICE ARAPI (†), first-born daughter of Gloria and Tobias, found dead in the Apsley Strait in 1952.
JASMINE MUNULUKA, wife of Andrew; sister of Dick and Rodney; clan sister of Jerome; stepdaughter of Isaac; and lover of Tobias.
JEANETTE DEENEN, wife of Eric, and 'daughter' of Jerome.
JEROME PAMANTARI, half-brother of Kate, classificatory brother of Jasmine and Nancy; father of Reuben; 'father' of Jeanette; classificatory son of Simon and Isaac; and brother-in-law of Tobias.
JESSICA NEMANGERAU, a widow; sister of Nancy; and former lover of Tobias.
JIM KERIMERINI, son of Bruce; brother of Betty; and classificatory son of Tobias.
JUDY ARAPI, daughter of Kate; sister of Carol; and stepdaughter of Tobias.

K

KANTILLA, classificatory brother of Minapini.
KATE MARUWAKA (†), half-sister of Jerome; mother of Ruth, Judy, Carol, Heather, Ralph, Shirley and Evelyn; second wife of Tobias; died of a snake bite in 1976.
KAREN INIARIMU, interpreter, daughter of Mary.
KARL HANSEN, Norwegian sailor who was living together with Laura in 1988.
KEVIN WANGITI, the accused; clan brother of Mavis, classificatory father of Sally.
KORUPU, a 'magic man'; father's father of Bill, Theodore, Mary, Simon and Mabel; and father's father's father of Jerome.

L

LAURA ARAPI, daughter of Gloria and Tobias.
LESTER CALLEY, husband of Maud.
LIONEL JATUKWANI, a ritual worker from Nguiu.

M

MANGATOBI, father's father of Paul; and father's brother of Alec, Jessica and Nancy.
MARTHA ARAPI, only surviving wife of Minapini; died in 1989.
MARY INIARIMU, sister of Bill, Theodore, Simon and Mabel; mother of Paul and Karen; and clan sister of Oscar; died in 1989.
MARYLOU KILIMIRIKA (†), third wife of Tobias; sister of Dorothy; died in a car accident in 1988.
MAUD CALLEY, a health worker; daughter of Nancy and Sam.
MAVIS PAMANTARI, sister of Jack; clan sister of Kevin; and classificatory mother of Tobias.
MAX TAMPAJANI, son of Agatha and Steven; and brother of Harold.
MELANIE WANGITI, a widow, sister of Anna; mother of Phillip; and lover of Roger.
MIKE KERIMERINI, the police tracker; son of Nancy.
MINAPINI, father of Jacob and Tobias; and former husband of Martha.

MILDRED PAMANTARI,the health worker in charge; daughter of Ella and Simon.
MILEWURI, father's father of Nancy.

N

NANCY KERIMERINI, wife of Sam; mother of Maud, Walter and Mike; 'mother' of Eric; sister of Jessica; half-sister of Alec; and former lover of Tobias.

O

OSCAR PAMANTARI, classificatory brother of Isaac; classificatory father of Jasmine; clan brother of Mary; and former lover of Ruth.

P

PAMELA WURUKWATI, classificatory mother of Kevin; and clan sister of Nancy and Marylou.
PAUL INIARIMU, son's son of Mangatobi; and son of Mary.
PATTY JATUKWANI (†), half-sister of Tobias.
PHILLIP WANGITI, an interpreter; son of Melanie; died in 1989.
PIMPARAMPRUNGI, son of Milewuri.
PIYIMPIWI, victim of Milewuri's sons.

R

RALPH ARAPI, son of Kate and Tobias.
REUBEN PAMANTARI, son of Jerome; living with Laura from 1991 onwards.
RODNEY PAMANTARI, younger brother of Dick and Jasmine.
ROGER IMALU, husband of Vanessa; lover of Melanie; and classificatory father of Tobias.
ROLF PAMANTARI, eldest son of Ella and Simon.
ROY MORNINGTON, adoptive brother of Dick, Jasmine and Rodney.
RYAN MUNULUKA, classificatory father of Tobias.
RUTH WAKITAPA, daughter of Kate; stepdaughter of Tobias; and wife of Theodore.

S

SALLY PAMANTARI, wife of Dick; clan sister of Andrew; and classificatory daughter of Kevin.
SAM KERIMERINI, younger brother of Bruce; husband of Nancy; father of Maud and Walter; and elder classificatory brother of Tobias.
SHIRLEY ARAPI, daughter of Kate and Tobias.
SIMON PAMANTARI, husband of Ella; brother of Bill, Theodore Mary and Mabel; father of Rolf and Mildred; and lover of Ruth.
STEVEN TAMPAJANI, husband of Agatha; father of Max and Harold; and classificatory brother of Bruce, Sam and Tobias.

T

THEODORE WAKITAPA, Simon's elder brother; and Ruth's husband.
TOBIAS ARAPI, the homicide victim.
TREVOR KIRINGARRA, most senior man of Tobias' country.

V

VANESSA IMALU, wife of Roger.

W

WALTER KERIMERINI, son of Nancy and Sam; and classificatory son of Tobias.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The problem

Tobias Arapi made me his friend. His tragic death has changed my life.

Sometimes it is as if I hear his voice or feel a gentle breeze and I remember how we sat under the mango tree in front of his hut, where Tobias shared his memories with me. I was shocked when I learned he had been killed.Why did it happen? How can Tobias' violent death be understood? Does this homicide make sense from Tiwi points of view?

The killing took place after I had been on Melville Island for nearly two months to conduct anthropological fieldwork. I had a close, if brief, relationship with the victim. With at least a period of one year to stay on the island I decided to document all events connected with the homicide case as meticulously as possible. The homicide puzzled me, but over time it became an avenue to gain insight into late-twentieth century Tiwi society and culture.

It remained unclear who had killed Tobias. How would the Tiwi people deal with the matter? What would happen next? What would be the impact of the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system on the course of events? How would Tiwi people evaluate the killing? What about its antecedents in histories of disputes and homicides? Had the killing been merely an accident, or did it arise from the situational context and underlying tensions in Tiwi social organisation? How does the homicide fit in the context of contemporary Tiwi society?

Tobias himself told me he experienced the death of important persons in his life in a different way than I would. He was 'a black man' and much older than I. Tobias had had many dreadful experiences of sudden and violent deaths in his family. To my mind came the words of Geertz, 'We cannot live other people's lives, and it is a piece of bad faith to try. We can but listen to what, in words, in images, in actions, they say about their lives' (1986: 373). That is one limitation in trying to capture the experiences of Tobias and his consociates, other Tiwi people. I had 'to listen'.

Another limitation is that I cannot claim to have an answer to the question of who actually killed Tobias. The advantage of this position, however, is that it enables me to explore possibilities within the context of late-twentieth century Tiwi society. As uncertainty and a number of possibilities were articulated by Tiwi people themselves, I hope, drawing on Moore (1975, 1987), to demonstrate the heterogeneity and indeterminancy of Tiwi culture. At the same time I want to establish that this people have retained a distinctly Tiwi way of doing things.

Homicides have been ill-researched in contemporary Aboriginal societies (cf. Brandl 1971: 341). In his book *Black Death White Hands*, Wilson paints a bleak picture of these societies by relating Aboriginal homicide to 'the sense of hopelessness and futility that exists among Aborigines - born out of dispossession and exploitation' (1982: 9). Wilson regards homicide and assault cases as indices of disintegration (ibid.: 16). The case of Alwyn Peter, who killed his girlfriend, threads through his book about violence in Aboriginal communities in Queensland around 1980. He states, 'For although the violence studied in this book is black people killing each other, we should never forget the historical and social roots of that violence. Whites have, by political, legal and sometimes police action, created conditions which foster murder and assault in Aboriginal communities' (ibid.: 9). I do not want to deny the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal societies, an impact that in many cases has been detrimental, to say the least, and that may vary from one place to another. I also understand the feelings of guilt that exist among white Australians or white people in general, but I doubt if attributing black deaths to white hands suffices to enhance our understanding of Aboriginal violence. The view that so-called Aboriginal crime is primarily related to anomie resulting from colonisation and excessive intervention of the state is problematic in a number of respects.

First, it denies Aboriginal people a commitment to their own deeds and bereaves them of their dignity. Second, it ignores that Aboriginal people might perceive their acts of violence differently. Conflicts and fighting generate meaning; despite our moral judgements, these are meaningful activities for Aboriginal people (see Macdonald 1988; Langton 1988). Finally, the enforcement of Anglo-Australian law and the pacification of Aboriginal societies have also been part of the history of colonisation. The ethnographic literature shows that before colonisation Aboriginal societies had high rates of violence and homicide. Therefore, the observed increases in violence might also be related to the disappearance of the so-called Aboriginal reserves as 'total institutions', to borrow Goffman's term, tightly controlled by white government or mission superintendents.

For most of the twentieth century, the Tiwi have been under missionary influence and Anglo-Australian law has been enforced on the islands. There have been long-lasting attempts to suppress traditional practices and to destroy Tiwi institutions (cf. Gsell 1956; Fallon 1991). In 1988-1990, there were five Tiwi cases of homicide; in a population of about 1900, this represents an annual homicide rate (87.7 per 100,000 persons) more than ten times that of the United States in 1986 (a rate of 8.6, cited in Kuschel 1992: 10).

Do these cases of homicide really indicate that Tiwi society has disintegrated? A thorough examination of a case of homicide, the killing of Tobias Arapi, might show, contrary to the thesis of 'the alienation school', that Aboriginal crime, and in this particular case, homicide, continues to be influenced by evolving, but distinctly Tiwi, cultural tradition.

There exists a widespread belief amongst the general public, including academics and administrators, that Tiwi 'traditional' institutions, especially in the ritual domain, have become less relevant in Tiwi day-to-day life and merely serve as a token of distinctiveness in contemporary Australian society. This belief is due to the apparent adaption of Tiwi to the institutions of modern Australia (such as politics and business). What we have here is another argument claiming, as it was put in a letter that came in the possession of the Tiwi Land Council, that Tiwi 'have lost their culture'. In October 1989, this was discussed during a land council meeting: the delegates to the land council were not amused. They agreed that I would write about contemporary Tiwi culture, including the seasonal and mortuary rituals. Even the Australian Ambassador in the Netherlands, who as a politician had visited Melville and Bathurst Islands during an electoral campaign, wondered why I as an anthropologist wanted to do research among the Tiwi. In his opinion the Tiwi, moving around in cars and on motorbikes, were 'too sophisticated'; Would it not be better to go to central Australia? In spite of this well-meant advice I readily accepted the invitation of the Tiwi Land Council after my research proposal had been accepted. I had my first meeting with Tiwi people during the opening of an exhibition of photographs at the Parliament House in Canberra, in the beginning of August 1988. In his opening speech the late Stanley Tipiloura, elected to the parliament of the Northern Territory, warned his audience that many people who briefly visited the islands went away with false impressions. They failed to grasp the continuity of a Tiwi way of doing things beneath the apparently Christianised and Westernised surface.

The strength of Tiwi culture amid change is central to my argument. True, the Tiwi have incorporated many elements of modern Australian society, but this has been done in a selective way. In my view, heterogeneity and indeterminancy are part and parcel of Tiwi culture. Admittedly, there also exist ambiguities as a result of the need for some Tiwi people to operate in mutually exclusive fields of cultural action (e.g., within the context of health care, the requirement of cooperation between health workers makes it difficult to maintain the practice of brother-sister avoidance). In general, however, it appears that the historical process of this people's encapsulation in the Australian nation-state did not necessarily compromise their distinctly Tiwi value and belief systems.

The present homicide case thus cannot be separated from its cultural and historical context. Until the foundation of a Roman Catholic mission on Bathurst Island in 1911, the Tiwi institution of killings in sneak attacks (*kwampi*) was in full operation. To a much lesser extent, violent deaths also occurred in spear-throwing duels and pitched battles. Pilling, who in 1954 recorded Tiwi homicide cases of the pre-mission period from the reminiscences of elderly people, arrived at a figure of 45 victims (mainly by the hands of sneak attackers) for the 1890-1909 period. This, with a population of roughly 1000 people, amounts to an overall average annual homicide rate of about 225 per 100,000 persons (1978: 35). In 1980, by

comparison, the annual homicide rate for Miami in the United States was 35.3 per 100,000 persons (see Daly & Wilson 1988: 285). The high level of violence, even if it might be somewhat exaggerated, in so-called traditional Aboriginal society also follows from Warner's calculations of the number of homicides in Arnhem Land. Warner estimates that about 200 persons had been killed, in a population of approximately 3,000 people, over a period of twenty years before 1926 (1930: 481-2; 1958: 157-8; but see Keen 1982: 641-2 note 12; Rose 1987: 35). Rose asserts that 'under traditional conditions homicide losses throughout Australia were very high' (ibid.). Whites had no hand in these killings. Pilling states that among the Tiwi '[b]efore the Mission was founded, only a small percentage of young male adults survived fights and sneak attacks' (1958: 112).

Pilling (1958: 122, 142; 1962; 1978: 82, 86) and Brandl (1971: 477-8) have advanced the thesis that as a result of the enforcement of Anglo-Australian law on the islands, Tiwi turned to killings by indirect means, 'poisonings', including actual poisonings as well as sorcery. 'Since the establishment of the Mission, "poisoning" has replaced outright killing as the means by which a group rids itself of an offender', according to Pilling (1958: 142). In other words, during the heyday of colonisation the Tiwi pattern of homicides, the infliction of direct lethal physical violence thus being outlawed, went underground from an Anglo-Australian point of view. Cases of 'poisoning' were rarely if ever detected by white authorities (cf. Brandl 1971: 478). In relation to one of the cases I recorded, I was told that two alleged 'poisoners' were 'taken to court' by Tiwi themselves; they admitted the offence and were punished, receiving a beating until blood flowed. My informants considered 'poisoning' still a realistic option in retaliation for a serious wrong.

Since the 1970s, when government policy concerning Aborigines changed from 'assimilation' to 'self-determination', Aboriginal societies in northern Australia have seen a cultural renaissance (cf. Borsboom 1982; 1987). A cultural revival has also taken place on Melville and Bathurst islands. The Tiwi are in formal possession of their own lands, their rituals no longer need to be hidden for the missionaries.

The cultural revival and the decline of supervision of Tiwi people's daily lives in the townships in the last two decades seem to have gone hand in hand with a re-emergence of killings by direct means. What these cases of homicide, say from 1974 until 1991, have in common with earlier cases is that my male and female informants related these to 'woman trouble': conflicts in which relationships with female partners are at stake. Disputes between men that revolve around women frequently occur and stand out as the most important reason given for killings in the literature (cf. Pilling 1958; Hiatt 1965; Brandl 1971; Burbank 1980; McKnight 1981; Rose 1987). Such 'women-related' disputes also might be the initial grievance leading to a series of killings (Pilling 1978: 10-11). Berndt states that, 'The most serious disputes are sometimes said to be instigated by "women and corpses"' (1965: 176). Hart and Pilling note that one of 'the main emphases

in Tiwi culture [is] the enormous frequency of disputes, fights, duels, and war parties arising directly or indirectly out of cases of seduction. If we may call this area of life the legal area, then over 90 percent of legal affairs were matters in which women were in some way involved' (1960: 80). What I have to report is that as of the end of 1980s, Tiwi society had seen little change in this regard. These matters were such an integral part of life and such frequent happenings that I do not expect to have recorded them all; sometimes I heard of and witnessed a handful of such occurrences in a single day.[1] Sexual jealousy, love affairs, and suspicions of infidelity were given as reasons for fights between marriage partners or lovers. When these kind of fights escalated relatives of either sex assisted each other but men fought men and women fought women. Competition for spouses or lovers and love affairs could lead to fights between women on the one hand and men on the other. My informants said they had never heard about female sneak attackers and that women never killed adults by direct means in the distant past.[2]

Alcohol figures in nearly all homicides of the past two decades. Alcohol also has more direct negative effects on human health, of course. In recent years the death toll in car and boating accidents as a result of intoxication has been extremely high: in 1987-1991, it amounted to at least 12 violent deaths, apart from other accidents and suicides. What must be noted, however, is that in general the use of alcohol is perceived differently by Aboriginal people than by mainstream Australian society. Brady and Palmer write, 'An inebriated person, in Aboriginal understandings, becomes a member of a different order of reality than the one who is not intoxicated' (1984: 2). These authors assert that drunkenness gives the persons in question licence to do things (e.g., utter grievances, inflict physical violence, and engage in sexual relationships) that otherwise would have severe social consequences. Drinkers themselves are not held fully responsible for their actions. When things threaten to get out of hand, others have to intervene. This, in particular, tends to be the case when an intoxicated person is angry, for this 'may lead to violent assault and even homicide' (ibid.: 27). Brady and Palmer note, 'it appears that physical harm is deemed to be a consequence of lack of vigilance on the part of consociates rather than the drunken excesses of an assailant' (ibid.). Tiwi people realise that white authorities do not accept intoxication as an excuse. A Tiwi woman, for instance, scorned a man who had told the police that another Tiwi man who had caused a fatal motor vehicle accident had been drunk. She said that it was wrong to tell this to the police, for now it was the other man's 'own fault'. It must be added that a majority of the population, especially children and most of the women, does not drink alcohol.

A number of Tiwi people said to me that they started heavy drinking after the loss of a significant other (e.g., a mother or a spouse). Drinkers and bereaved alike are in danger of doing harm to themselves, if not directly then indirectly, by provoking others. Both categories of people can express themselves freely and usually get support and protection from their

consociates. The licence given to these groups comes close to personal autonomy: in contrast to others, they do not have to worry about possible consequences of their behaviour. Aboriginal drinking is an organised and meaningful social activity (see Collman 1979; Sansom 1980). Among Tiwi drinkers, beer is a currency that gives substance to social relationships. People are paid for their ritual services with cans of beer. Tiwi males give their female partners beer when they engage in extramarital affairs. The use of beer cuts both ways: it cements social relationships and it enables a temporal disregard of restrictions and conventions that go with social ties in everyday experience.

The stereotype of the relaxed, leisurely lifestyle of Aboriginal people is somewhat misplaced. One informant said she did not like to go to another township because there were 'too much relations there'. In Tiwi society it is the person who makes the request who decides about a gift (e.g., money, goods, services), not the donor. Blunt refusal makes the other ashamed (*aliranga*), which has to be prevented at all costs; and refusal can have other repercussions, such as being blamed for harm that befalls the person who made the request. A Tiwi man called this 'family pressure'. For example, in one Tiwi township the bank agency was closed after $50,000 was discovered missing; as a result of the cultural imperative mentioned, the employees could not resist the demands of their relatives and friends to 'borrow' money. The demands are numerous and manifold, especially in the contemporary large-scale townships (the three townships have about 300, 400, and 1200 inhabitants respectively).

McKnight shows that the increase in violence and fighting in an Aboriginal 'supercamp' on Mornington Island was due to the large population and high relational density; compared with the pre-settlement small camps (dwelling places) of about twenty closely related people, the more heterogeneous settlement of about 600 people, where one had to fulfill obligations to numerous actual and classificatory kin present, did put a strain on peaceful interaction (1986). With limited means and resources Tiwi individuals are constantly forced to make choices, as it is impossible to make everyone happy (*kukunari*). Time after time, social relationships have to be negotiated and given substance by sharing company, food, money, or whatever. The significance of this mediated affectionate attachment became clear to me when a young Tiwi man told me, 'I always give my [classificatory] grandfather cigarettes so I have something to cry for when he dies.' What matters here is their personal relationship, not the cigarettes. Cherished relationships are characterised by warmth, affection, respect, and the utmost care for the other person. To be sustained, these relationships must be continuously fed.

The seamy side of life is recurring conflict and violence. Such conflict demarcates the social and emotional interests in individuals' involvement in networks with regard to infringements at a certain point of time. Identity claims can be lodged in this small-scale society, where everyone is either classificatory or actual kin, but from the perspective of an individual some

relationships gain significance at the cost of others, and conflicts indicate an individual's stand in relation to shared identities acknowledged concerning issues at dispute. Over time one's identifications, the cherished networks of social relationships, shift like patterns in a kaleidoscope. This, of course, involves politicking. I follow Boissevain's description of politics as people competing with each other 'for valued scarce resources, for prizes which form the important goals of their lives' (1974: 232). Tiwi individuals pursue political goals, they strive to accumulate social wealth instead of material possessions, and hence they have to defend interests. In these politics one's choices are context-dependent, decisions are made on the basis of what relationships are deemed important, and these determine whether conflict and violence are avoided or not (see Myers 1986a: 16-7). Articulation of what is contested in such a close-knit society implies social distancing between opponents. Anger about a perceived wrong and drunkenness, according to Myers, probably both 'provide the same excuse for violence: ignorance of the identity of the other' (ibid.: 119). It is also evident in a historical case I describe in chapter 3 in which the killers pretended 'not to know' their victim. Their father, however, recognized his close relationship with the victim. In his anger he asked his clan brothers from elsewhere to retaliate, and to execute capital punishment of his own sons. I was told these sons had already somewhat estranged their father from them by 'humbugging' or courting his younger wives. The case demonstrates that social bonds of whatever nature cannot unconditionally be relied upon. Uncertainty about the consequences of social actions is an important theme of this work.

Despite the townships' larger scale, Tiwi society maintains the features of a small-scale society. Williams discusses the importance of social scale as a general phenomenon in relation to disputes in another northern Australian Aboriginal society (1987: 155-63). She calls attention to 'forms of social interaction that occur in all small social groups whose members are linked to one another by multiple and dense ties, usually those of kinship' (ibid.: ix). I want to argue that closer inspection of the present homicide case, at first sight a symptom of 'disintegration' (see Wilson 1982: 10), shows Tiwi people's enormous creative potential, and an attempt to realise autonomy within historically and politically rooted constraints.

In their pervasive study of the use of alcohol among Aborigines, Brady and Palmer found that 'Aboriginal people have retained their identity and their cultural systems to an extent which made phrases like "cultural breakdown" or "social disintegration" irrelevant' (1984: 1). It is definitely wrong to conceive of Tiwi society as a 'primitive isolate' as Tiwi people are encapsulated by a dominant wider society on which they have become economically dependent, and furthermore they are subject to Anglo-Australian law. Notwithstanding the remoteness of the islands, Tiwi people are in touch with the world at large. Western commodities and information about what goes on in the world are part of their lives. The members of one Aboriginal family with whom I was closely acquainted, for example,

financially adopted a child in the Third World. The mortuary poles erected in a Tiwi postfuneral ritual can afterwards be sold to an art gallery in Japan or the United States. Large-scale and long-term historical processes connect to small-scale local events (cf. Moore 1987: 729-30). A 1988 homicide on Melville Island predictably led to the involvement of the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system, had an impact on how Tiwi people could deal with the matter themselves, and was the result of the imposition of another legal system, declared about two centuries ago and gradually enforced over the preceding eigthy years. Recent Tiwi homicides display in outward form somewhat modified characteristics compared to the institution of sneak attacks before outside intrusion. In these outright killings, knives have replaced spears as the almost exclusive weapon. Intra-community killings emerged in contrast to the sneak attacks as extra-local affairs, and in addition the former seem to be alcohol-related. In two cases women killed as well, which seems to have been without historical precedent, but in any event it indicates homicidal actions of females were rare. Two of the five homicide cases in three years (1988-1990) remained unsolved as far as the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system is concerned. Leaving aside the case in which a white man was the victim, there was one case of a man stabbing to death his wife, who had threatened to leave him, in November 1989. A planeload of police was flown in to prevent the husband from being lynched by his wife's relatives; this man got a life sentence. In April 1990, a man found another man in bed with his wife and killed him. The killer was convicted of manslaughter. In October 1988, a man was stabbed to death. And the same happened to another man in January 1990. In both cases the actual killer remained unknown to the Australian police. My informants stated that these killings had to do with trouble related to exchange of marriage partners between matriclans. After a killing, sneak attackers used to paint their bodies with white pipeclay and they pulled out their beards; they were thus identifiable by their consociates elsewhere. According to my informants this practice had ceased to exist. When it was possible (in other cases it was too obvious) the actual killers remained hidden after the contemporary homicides, a strategy also employed by the 'poisoners' in the era in between the pre- and post-colonial times of outright killings. In this way they protected themselves against the close associates of their victims, who were more likely to be present in the larger-scale townships, and also against the investigating police.

Maddock writes that in Aboriginal societies 'the most puzzling cases for an outsider concern death by violence' (1982: 151). Therefore, such a case might be seen as a challenge to anthropological interpretation (Keesing n.d.). Shore states, 'An alien culture is inevitably a mystery and its comprehension can aptly be described as a piece of detective work' (1982: xiii). Two experienced police detectives investigated the homicide on Melville Island that occurred in October 1988. They charged a Tiwi man with murder, but after five months in jail and a murder trial in the Northern Territory Supreme Court that lasted three weeks he was released

due to a lack of evidence. Tiwi people, from the outset, were adamant that the police had charged the wrong person. I look at the case from an ethnographic angle and represent the Tiwi side of the story.

This work is based on sixteen months of fieldwork in the islands, from September 1988 to November 1989 and a follow-up in October and November 1991. This period of time covers my close acquaintance with the victim, the trouble he got involved in, the reactions to the killing of those with whom he shared his life, the creative reflections on his violent death in elaborate mortuary practices and rituals, the indecisive enforcement of Australian law, and the aftermath. I approach the described sequence of events as an open-ended process and draw on people's use of historical narrative, ritual expression, and the statements and actions of those people most involved to unravel a clash of interests. The homicide case sheds light on the relevance of the actions of individuals and politics in this Australian Aboriginal society (cf. Myers 1986b: 139). I have taken care to represent multiple voices instead of framing a single authorative account of '*the* native's point of view'.

A homicide is violent death; as such it offers a contrast to a 'natural' death (Hertz 1960: 80). Tiwi are familiar with violent deaths. The station files in Pularumpi's police office show that at least 48 deaths were inquired into by a coroner between June 1983 and March 1991. These included cases of suicide, fatal motor vehicle and boating accidents, deaths under suspicious circumstances (i.e., poisoning), and homicides. The emotional reactions to an abrupt and sudden death, especially a violent death, were more intense, and the mortuary rituals tended to be more elaborate. Broadly speaking, these rituals tended to follow the same pattern as in other cases. The advantage of the present case is that it covers more ritual elements or episodes that in other cases are less elaborated or absent. It has been argued that Aborigines regard all deaths as killings (Spencer & Gillen 1968: 476; Elkin 1964: 319). Meggitt reports that among the Walbiri Aborigines nearly all deaths were believed to be 'basically "homicides"' in 1953 (1962: 246). Symbolic killings are an important element in Tiwi rituals. The rituals related to the present homicide case are interesting, for here an actual killing coincides with these symbolic killings in the ritual context. The experience of killing, which has an extra dimension for this hunting people, is carried over in the symbolism of Tiwi mortuary ritual in every type of death. Death by means of a killing is so sudden and abrupt that it can serve as a very powerful image of separation and subsequent transformation (see Hertz 1960: 73; cf. Burke 1974: 19-20). Rooted in this people's experience, killing or homicide appears a major theme played upon in Tiwi ritual. The theme of killing also figures in other rituals that mark a transition, such as seasonal rituals. Given the narrative character of Tiwi ritual, actual killings exemplify this theme in the performances of participants. These killings as events are recontextualized and so gain new meanings. (I will refer to the hidden meanings in the ritual use of past killings before and after Tobias' own death.) This extended case history of a homicide therefore has a special

quality, because it demonstrates how Tiwi generate meaning out of this killing.

Deaths are good vantage points from which to view a society. According to Huntington and Metcalf, 'the issue of death throws into relief the most important cultural values by which people live their lives and evaluate their experiences. Life becomes transparent against the background of death, and fundamental social and cultural issues are revealed' (1979: 2). The central importance of death-related behaviour in Tiwi society will become apparent in the following chapters.

I use 'homicide' and 'killing' interchangeably and as neutral terms, while I refrain from employing the term 'murder' because of its suggestion of unlawfulness and premeditation. A homicide that is considered an indictable offence by Anglo-Australian criminal law is of course not necessarily wrong in Aboriginal views (cf. Stanner 1979: 87). Unless stated, 'killing' is not used in terms of local usage, meaning also hitting or injuring (e.g., a Tiwi person can say, 'I was killed yesterday'), but as an equivalent of homicide. I use 'violence', in terms of Riches (1986, 1991), to indicate 'purposive harmful behaviour' without negative connotations.

1.2 Fieldwork

In the year Australia was celebrating its bicentennial of European invasion, the Tiwi Land Council, representing the Aboriginal people from Melville and Bathurst islands, gave me permission to conduct anthropological research in the islands. The accepted research proposal focused on a study of Tiwi mortuary ritual and mortuary practices. The delegates to the land council who lived in Pularumpi on Melville Island had decided they wanted me and my wife, Jeanette, to stay in their community. Near Pularumpi, also known as Garden Point, are the remains of Fort Dundas, the first British colonial settlement in northern Australia (1824-1829), abandoned within five years (cf. Campbell 1834). It was not until 1937 that the Australian government founded a rations depot at Garden Point, in an attempt to put a hold on the relations that had developed between Tiwi and Japanese pearl divers. The Native Affairs Branch deported 89 Aborigines from Darwin, so-called incorrigibles, to Garden Point in 1939; these people were used as a workforce. A year later, they were shifted to Snake Bay in the north central part of the island, where a war settlement had been founded. In Garden Point, Catholic missionaries took over. In accordance with government policy, they started a so-called half-caste mission to raise Aboriginal children of mixed descent within their denomination (Harney 1965: 70-5; Altman 1988: 253). These children, between two months and 14 years old, were taken away from their parents. In 1968, the mission sold out to the government: Garden Point became a Tiwi community (Pye 1985: 87-9). Some families of mixed descent stayed, as well as a small Tiwi population that had lived on the fringe of the mission. Tiwi people from elsewhere,

including a bush camp in the southwest of the island, were brought to the place. Many had specific territorial rights in the area where the township now is located. At the end of the 1970s, the Tiwi, who lived on reserves, were granted land rights under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of 1976. Three predominantly Aboriginal townships exist now on Melville and Bathurst islands which have developed out of previous mission and government settlements: Nguiu, Milikapiti, and Pularumpi. Around 1,900 Tiwi people live in these island townships. In September 1988, Pularumpi had a population of about 300.

The light aircraft that came in twice a day circled above Fort Dundas and then descended over huge mango and cashew trees, planted by the mission nearly fifty years earlier, before it landed on Pularumpi's unpaved airstrip. In the pre-wet, that is before the rains, the atmosphere was hot and humid. Three tourists, bathing in their sweat, left the cramped plane. They were taken to Putjamirra Safari Camp, about 20 km north of Pularumpi, in a landrover. The African-style tourist resort was in its second year of operation. A Tiwi woman was greeted by her relatives who had come to the airstrip. My wife and I were expected too. For the first few days we stayed in the vacant presbytery, then moved to a dilapidated little house in the heart of the community. Tiwi people helped us to fix up our Pularumpi home.

On the day of our arrival there was a dancing ceremony under the mango trees in an area locally known as the Old Camp (see Map 2). Here I met two delegates to the Tiwi Land Council, Roger Imalu and Jerome Pamantari, and a senior woman called Nancy Kerimerini. These people told me I had come to study their 'culture'. I was frequently told the people on Bathurst Island did not know much. The senior people in Pularumpi had decided, so I was told, to teach me. They played outstanding roles in ceremonial life, indeed, but their efforts also reflected a rivalry between the two Tiwi islands and the three communities. I would soon find out there were not only rivalries between the communities but also between local Tiwi people themselves. In the Social Club, a beer canteen, Jerome announced that my wife was from then on his 'daughter', whereupon, following a discussion with Roger, Nancy made it known I would be her 'son'. She embraced us and kissed us. White people who were expected to stay in the community for a longer period of time were soon given a position in the kinship system, whether they knew it or not. The local white teachers, for instance, were considered 'brothers' of the only male Tiwi teacher, and the two local police officers tended to be regarded as 'brothers' of the Aboriginal police tracker.[3] On one hand, the appropriation of white relatives facilitates regulated behaviour that goes with kin relationships. All Tiwi are either actual or classificatory kin: affection, respect (including avoidance), joking, claims and obligations are frequently expressed with an appeal to a particular kin relationship. On the other hand, the incorporation of whites, in varying degrees, gives Tiwi people access to resources (e.g.,

'help', services, food, and money). Jerome, for example, told me the next day, I had to 'support' him because he was my 'father-in-law'.

The power relations between Tiwi (*tunuwi*, 'we, black people'), Aboriginal people of mixed descent (*pinawi*), and white people (*muruntawi*) in the community are complex and intricate. Power depends very much on context. As far as local administration is concerned, white people and people of mixed descent are in control. In 1988, the newly elected community government council consisted of eleven councillors of whom only three were 'full-bloods' (a term used by Tiwi), two Aboriginal health workers and a teacher. The well-paid jobs and housing are also unevenly divided. Most white people and a large number of the people of mixed descent maintain a mainstream Australian lifestyle. Not all Tiwi people aspire to this, nor do they all want the constraints of permanent jobs. The maintenance of the township, designed in Western style, is considered the responsibility of the local council. A Tiwi man of mixed descent, councillor and president for most of a decade, who managed the local store and the social club and who was engaged in several other enterprises, was said to 'run the place'. He is the leader of a development-oriented faction in the community (cf. Altman 1988: 257-61) and most of the achievements in this direction come to his credit. However, other senior Tiwi dominate their own 'business', such as Tiwi ways ('the Law'), social affairs and ceremonial life. Tiwi people are well aware they are a majority in the islands (cf. Pilling 1965). Since the establishment of the Tiwi Land Council in 1978, they know they officially have the power to expell others they do not like, although in practice this is not always an easy task.

The general attitude is that outsiders are there to 'help' Tiwi and that these non-Tiwi have to 'listen'. The obligation to 'help' and support people is part of personal and hence also kin relationships, rarely an obligation to the community as a whole (see also Myers 1986a). Tiwi people clearly and confidently express their views. Several times I heard a missionary being told to 'shut up' when his timing of Catholic ceremonies was regarded as an intrusion in the course of a Tiwi mortuary ritual. The resources of outsiders are carefully taxed: the willingness and ability to give in both a material and immaterial sense (including prestige to be obtained), the degree of socialising with Tiwi people (white police officers and teachers with their families live somewhat apart), and the duration of someone's presence (there is high turn-over of white staff). Tiwi people are keen observers and they have studied other people already for a long time. We were often questioned about life in Europe. I heard many jokes about white people's habits, such as sitting with crossed legs, their way of walking, addressing each other by their personal names, talking openly with their sisters, and so forth.

The initial days of fieldwork were overwhelming and, I must admit, quite taxing as well. The morning after our arrival, Nancy took my wife and I with her into the mangrove swamps and wanted us to share in a feast of delicious mud crabs, mussels and whelks. In the afternoon, Jerome demonstrated his spear-making skills. He gave us a number of artifacts he

had made, such as throwing sticks, a barbed spear, and miniature mortuary poles, while he said he would produce some better poles because these were only for 'bloody tourists'. Through people's requests for money, beer, food, and so on, we soon learned the kinship terms with which our new 'relatives' adressed us, and we made attempts to use the reciprocal terms. Whenever we were unable or unwilling to satisfy people's demands, we gave some explanation or a white lie to prevent them from becoming embarrassed. After an initial testing we became attuned to the way Tiwi dealt with these matters, requests being part and parcel of our social relationships. What worried me most was whether we would be going to be monopolised by Jerome and his classificatory sister Nancy (MFDD) or by Tobias, a senior man who lived in the Old Camp. At the time, Jerome and Nancy were on bad terms with Tobias for reasons that will become clear later on. Jerome presented himself to me as a knowledgeable person and almost immediately started to teach me words in the Tiwi language.

Late at night, someone rattled at our door. A lean Aboriginal man with grey hair introduced himself as Tobias Arapi. He said he had heard about us; this was the reason that he had come to see us. Tobias said that he was concerned about the younger people losing their culture. According to him, even adult men did not know their language properly; they mixed things up. He said he had taught the children in school about their language and the corroborees (an Australian word for Aboriginal ceremonies). Tobias stressed that it was important that we would 'get it straight' and what we would write down had to be correct, because after we left we would pass it on to other people. In this context he asked about the words we had already learned (from Jerome). He used these as a case in point: Some of these words were wrong! 'This is what I mean', said Tobias, 'it is all mixed up in their heads.' He gave us the 'right' words and left no doubt that *he* was a better teacher. 'In my opinion', he phrased his proposal, we would have to start together with the smaller words and after much repetition proceed to the more difficult and larger ones. Tobias emphasised that he was a knowledgeable man. He had been to Canberra twice to give the comments in an ethnographic film about a Tiwi mortuary ritual. 'I explained the concepts and ideas', Tobias said.

These were the first signs of a rivalry between Tobias and his brother-in-law Jerome. It was not uncommon, I later found, for various people to hold divergent views on 'traditional' matters. I witnessed arguments over, for instance, the proper pronunciation of words in the song language, the most suitable place to bury the dead, the application of taboos, the proper order of the dancers and the right way to dance in mortuary ritual. '*The* native's point of view' was problematic, as there hardly existed one commonly shared and coherent view to be automatically followed. Ritual praxis, for example, was something that had to be negotiated. This process reflected both social rivalries and a kaleidoscope of 'little traditions', and perhaps also insecurities or ambiguities about what had been inherited from the past (cf. Borofski 1987). Tiwi, as I understand it, creatively created

author-ity in their performances, in which people co-operated on the basis of mutual obligations. In other words, they were continuously shaping their culture with their own creations and reworking, alluding to, re-enacting, and selecting from the cumulative store of previous creations.

In our first meeting, Tobias revealed much about himself and his life, speaking about his children and his deceased wives. His third and last wife, Marylou Kilimirika, had been killed in a car accident a few months earlier. Tears came to his eyes. 'The memories of a black man are different', said Tobias, 'I see her before my eyes all the time.' Tobias told us that he would leave Pularumpi that week to stay with his daughter Heather in the other township on Melville Island. Perhaps, he continued, he would return at the end of the wet season for the annual yam ritual. 'I get sick of that ceremony business', he said. Marylou had died not long ago, and, therefore, Tobias did not know yet if he would come back for the yam ritual. He said he had to think about it, but that there was still plenty of time. 'It's up to me', he explained, but it also depended on Simon (the 'boss' of the ritual) and Jerome Pamantari, his brother-in-law: 'If they say I'll have to go, I will go. Maybe they have made [mourning] songs [for the dead woman]. There has to be a good reason. I have to think about it.' I learned from Simon that it would be difficult for Tobias because he and Marylou had participated in the previous yam ritual, three months before the accident. Despite Tobias' intention to leave Pularumpi, we would see each other often from then on until his death. We had long talks at our place and on the verandah of his hut or under the mango tree in front of it. Sometimes Tobias cried. Several times he showed us photographs of his wife Marylou, saying that he did not need these to picture her. Tobias was the first to give me a sense of what death meant for a Tiwi person. On our way to a funeral at Bathurst Island he took me to Paru (southwest of Melville Island) to introduce me to his and his deceased wife's relatives, a few elderly women, much to the annoyance of Nancy, who wanted to get across the sea strait to the other island. Tobias called me 'son' and gave me a Tiwi name. This upset Nancy's husband, Sam, who never stopped telling me that I was his 'real son', his 'own son'. When Tobias became involved in an affair with another woman, it was because that woman - her body, the texture of her skin, their love-making, and her smell - reminded him of his dead wife. In this way Tobias indicated the role that personal experiences play in Tiwi dealings with death. I feel that these experiences cannot nor should not be flattened out (cf. Loïzos 1991: 9). It is all too easy to dismiss death-related emotions of other people as 'not really felt' and merely 'simulated' (e.g., Osborne 1974: 111; Durkheim 1965: 397).

Tobias lived in the Old Camp, which was the focus of ceremonial activities (see Map 2). The huge mango trees provided shade for the people beneath them. During the hottest times of the year it was considered one of the most pleasant places to be in the township, as there was always a gentle breeze. Lorrikeets flocked in the trees, eating the ripening mangoes. By moonlight,

Tiwi boys tried to shoot flying foxes in the mango and cashew trees with their catapults. Visitors to the Old Camp had to chase away the many camp dogs that roamed there.

Tobias occupied one of the little houses or huts in the Old Camp. In the 1960s, these huts were built for the people of mixed descent who had been raised at the local mission. Tobias' hut consisted of a single square room (approximately 2 x 2 metres) with a verandah in front, put on a concrete slab; the hut had a tin roof, a door, and three small windows with glass louvres. Like his neighbors, Tobias did his cooking on a campfire outside. Water could be obtained from one of the few taps in the area. The Tiwi people in the Old Camp shared one toilet building.

In the hut opposite Tobias' lived his mother's clan brother Isaac Pamantari. Isaac was widely regarded as the most knowledgeable person in the township in matters of traditional lore. Next to Tobias, on the verandah of a somewhat larger house, stayed Geoffrey Adranango, a clan brother of Tobias' father. Geoffrey first camped under a tree, but he had moved to the verandah because of the rains. Tobias regarded this man as his friend. Geoffrey was very ill and Tobias often brought him bush food. Kevin Wangiti, a bachelor and also a clan brother of Tobias' father, lived in the hut next to Geoffrey. In this direction, behind the huts and further on passing behind the health clinic, a footpath led to the social club. Except on Sundays, people could drink beer here from 4 till 7 p.m. On the edge of the Old Camp, opposite the club, stood Simon Pamantari's hut.

The footpath went in the other direction to the camp of Tobias' classificatory brother Sam Kerimerini, back in the Old Camp. This camp consisted of a semicircular grouping of five huts. The membership of this camp fluctuated, as often visiting relatives from the other townships stayed at this place. The more or less steady occupants of the huts were Sam and his wife Nancy, their two adult sons, and Tobias' daughter Laura and her white friend Karl Hansen. The white man, a Norwegian sailor, did not talk much. He cared for his pet lorrikeets and experimented with tropical gardening, and in order to protect his plants against children and dogs he had put up wire-netting.

The only metalled road, which led from the barge landing to the community buildings (school, store, and council office), separated the Old Camp from the rest of the township. Late at night, people used to play cards under the street lights on the other side of the road. Pre- and postfuneral rituals and the seasonal yam ritual were held at ceremonial grounds in the Old Camp. Local community meetings and outdoor Catholic masses took place in this location as well. The people in the Old Camp had many visitors during the day who preferred their company under the trees, chatting and playing cards. The elderly people in the Old Camp - Isaac, Simon, Nancy, Sam, and Geoffrey - received pensioner cheques every fortnight (A$219). Karl had a relatively well-paid job as a carpenter with the local housing association. Kevin also was paid by the local community council; he helped maintain the public gardens. Nancy's son Mike was the local Aboriginal

police tracker. He had learned his tracking skills from Tobias, who had been in this job previously. Tobias and his daughter Laura participated in the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP, cf. Morony 1991) that had replaced unemployment benefits in the townships on Melville Island. They did various cleaning jobs and in accordance with CDEP regulations worked a maximum of four hours a day for five days a week (earning A$5 per hour). Tobias obtained some additional income demonstrating his hunting skills as a tourist guide for Putjamirra Safari Camp. The Safari Camp would be temporarily closed during the wet season. When this was about to happen, Tobias was found dead under the mango tree in front of his hut in the Old Camp.

Tobias had been stabbed to death. The people in the Old Camp used 'under the mango tree' in referring to Tobias instead of his name, which had become taboo. 'Under the mango tree' was also employed as a label for the killing, a label that was significant in more than one sense: the place name designated not only this event, but also alluded to two other killings 'under the mango tree' in the Old Camp in the 1970s, gave a clue as to what the trouble was all about, and stressed that it was important where the corpse had been found. (The mango tree is an introduced plant, and the English expression was used. The word for mango is a general term for fruit, *kruti* derived from the English 'fruit'. A mango or cashew tree is called *arumatukwa'einti-kruti*.) Other homicides were labelled as well. For Tiwi people, place names evoked history, and signified significant events. For instance, the place name 'Matalau' indicated a fourfold killing by Tobias' father. Descriptions might also be given; for instance, 'they couldn't go to sleep, they watched them [as if they were asleep]' (*pruningramangani*) for a particular sneak attack when the prospective victims were on the alert, or 'gammon [pretending], he was good to him' (*tumarunuki*) for an unexpected killing in which the killer used his supposed friendship with the victim as a technique of deception.

From the outset, the mortuary rituals were an important focus of my research. Western means of communication and transport have enabled Tiwi to organise larger funerals than ever before (the deceased are usually buried within a day). From the telephones at the Aboriginal health centres people throughout the islands were rapidly informed about deaths. Transport from Pularumpi was on a large cattle truck, in the back of smaller four-wheel-drive vehicles, and in dinghies with outboard motors. As we had no car, we soon learned the Tiwi ways of organising a ceremony and its logistics from within. Many people commented on the rituals for me when they were in progress. During our fieldwork Jeanette and I attended two dozen funerals and numerous postfuneral rituals, including twenty-one large final mortuary rituals (called *iloti* or 'forever'). At times we experienced the deaths in Pularumpi as traumatizing, such as the tragic deaths of our neighbour's baby under the wheels of a car, a young man crushed by his car, and Tobias'

being stabbed to death, as well as the more peaceful deaths of an old man and woman we became fond of. I do not pretend to have been a detached observer in these cases or others. Our observations were further interrupted by our obligations to perform various kinds of ritual roles, although we experienced these activities as rewarding, both emotionally and for the purposes of the research. Besides the death rituals, we also attended two seasonal yam rituals, one in Melville Island and one in Bathurst Island. These rituals, which each lasted three days and nights, were dedicated to Tobias.

The documentation of the rituals was time-consuming. Most of the time went to transcribing the songs recorded on tape. From a few weeks after our arrival onwards, Nancy translated the songs for me into English. She could neither read nor write, and had been partially raised in a traditional setting in the bush and partially by the nuns of the Bathurst Island Mission. She was fluent in English and the Tiwi song language. Nancy was not only an outstanding song composer herself, she was also the only woman who could sing after all the men in the yam ritual when they showed the best of their abilities. In our regular sessions I tried to refrain from asking her leading questions, but when I put propositions to her she also answered in the negative when she was of another opinion. The mourning songs of widows and widowers often dealt with sexual topics; these evoked a lot of laughter and fun. She was inventive in finding words to circumvent the use of English names for the private parts described in Tiwi. For the male genitals, for example, she employed oranges and apples, and bananas of all sizes and positions. Regardless of this circumvention in the use of English words, the fact that she was talking with a man seemed of little concern to her. Nancy freely discussed topics like menstruation, sexuality, and childbirth with me, issues which in most cases she introduced herself. Whenever Jeanette was present she was included in these discussions. I think that the lack of obstacles to Nancy and I working together can be best explained by my position as her 'son' with the status of a married man. Although among the Tiwi the division between women and men is less strict than in most Aboriginal societies, it very much depends on the social relationship and age. Jeanette obtained a wealth of information from women who were not within my reach. Nancy clearly did not belong to this category of people (e.g., in avoidance relationships). She even armed me with Tiwi profanities to use in exchanges with my 'brothers-in-law'.

At times it appeared as if the Tiwi world consisted of living from one mortuary ritual to the other. In one exceptional week there were four funerals: 'Trouble everywhere!' Jerome exclaimed. With some irony I might say that we were the most enthusiastic funeral-goers. Tiwi certainly did not go to all funerals, nor even some funerals when it seemed approriate for them to do so. The same holds true for the postfuneral rituals. In quite a number of cases the organisers of rituals refused to accept excuses and became angry at the absentees. This kind of 'big trouble' was called 'mob didn't come'. Another kind of trouble, when people would be sent away,

was 'they didn't look after him [the deceased]'. There is certainly something at stake in the performances in mortuary ritual, but I will save this topic for later chapters.

Our grasp of ordinary Tiwi life we obtained through the technique of participant observation. We spent considerable time with the people in the Old Camp and other significant places in the township daily. Whenever it was appropriate, we participated: chatting, waiting for the shop to be opened in the mornings, playing cards, drinking beer in the social club, accompanying people on hunting trips, and so forth. Conversations were mostly in a mixture of Tiwi and English. Tiwi taught us their language but I never fully mastered it. An Aboriginal language is not learned overnight and it takes many years to become fluent in, if ever (Von Sturmer 1981; Lee 1987: 360n.7). Osborne's study of the Tiwi language, containing a grammar and a dictionary, was helpful in enlarging my understanding (1974). Lee (1987) gives further insight into the complexities of language change among the Tiwi and describes four distinguished codes used in speech according to social and cultural factors. Tiwi speak English and Tiwi in varying degrees of fluency. Sometimes people instructed us, but as formal education was not their way of learning we had to see or find out many things for ourselves. I obtained my information about people's views of what went on mainly in informal conversations, preferably on the spot when things were happening or in quiet moments as soon as possible after events took place. Much was also tape-recorded. The citations are verbatim, sometimes with minimal editing to make them readable. Listening to gossip was always important, too, in keeping my ear to the ground.

By and large, I concentrated on the social networks centred in the Old Camp. Jeanette found her own way around: she was a free barber, made clothes for people, helped Tiwi women to set up a creche and assisted the Aboriginal health workers in the local health centre they ran.

It might be obvious that we learned the most from the people with whom we were in close contact; from these people I gathered life histories. I collected genealogies and oral histories and took a census of the people living in Pularumpi. As time went on, we became involved in the social networks of people based in the Old Camp, which as mentioned earlier was a focal point in local social and ceremonial life. At first, I concentrated on this section of the community for pragmatic reasons. Tobias, the later homicide victim, was part of these networks. His tragic death left me among the bereaved. I documented all I could in relation to the homicide case. We attended the mourning sessions and inquests, the elaborate mortuary rituals, the committal hearings in the Court of Summary Jurisdiction in Pularumpi and Darwin, and the murder trial in the Northern Territory Supreme Court in Darwin. I recorded in great detail the different points of view and behaviour of the Tiwi involved in the sequence of events before the killing and for more than a year afterward, and again when I returned in 1991. Tobias has, posthumously, made his stamp on this account. The largest part

of the period of observation coincides with the transition of his spirit from the world of the living (*tiwi*) to the world of the dead (*mopadruwi*).

I have discussed the homicide not only with Tiwi, but also with white police officers, prosecutors and solicitors involved in the case. I have studied the police interrogation records and other police documents, and the transcripts of the court proceedings.

Despite the history of the place and its people - displacement, invasion, and domination - the local Tiwi people considered Pularumpi a stronghold of Tiwi 'culture'. A processual approach is needed to understand what that 'culture' means in the context of late twentieth-century Tiwi society.

1.3 Processual analysis

How can the real life of contemporary Tiwi people and the issues of importance to them be captured and understood in an ethnographic account? Uncertainty, hesitation, ambiguity, spontaneity, change of mind, coincidence and improvisation are as much a part of everyday life experience as plans, habits and customs. Over-structured accounts cannot reflect the disorderly aspects of people's lives. As a student of anthropology I often wondered how many things were explained away as being mere exceptions or atypical, and I wondered what happened over time to the neat social orders and cultural systems, synchronic structures. An approach that can deal more satisfatorily with these matters is called processual analysis. Rosaldo describes it thus:

> This view stresses the case history method; it shows how ideas, events, and institutions interact and change through time. Such studies more nearly resemble the medical diagnosis of a particular patient than lawlike generalizations about a certain disease. Rather than asking, for example, about the causes of heart disease in general, such studies use a combination of generalizations and knowledge of specifics to make complex judgements about how to treat a patient who, say, exercises little, is of a certain age, and has angina, high blood pressure, a history of allergies, and a tendency toward obesity. One thus tries to understand particular cases by showing how a number of factors come together, rather than separating them out, one by one, and showing their independent effects. (1989: 92-3)

Rosaldo here echoes the historian Ginzburg (1988), who describes how an epistemological model or paradigm based on the idea of medical diagnosis emerged within range of the social sciences in the late nineteenth century. He compares the methods of Morelli, Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, and Freud; art connoisseur, detective, and psychoanalyst, respectively. Their methods have in common that they take seemingly trivial and marginal details as revealing clues, making inferences from the known about the unknown deeper reality. So Morelli could identify the artist of a particular work, Holmes the author of a crime, and Freud a neurotic disorder. It is clear in all three cases - Morelli, Conan Doyle, and Freud had studied medicine - that inspiration was derived from medical semiotics, as Ginzburg calls it: 'the discipline which permits diagnosis, though the disease cannot be

directly observed, on the basis of superficial symptoms or signs, often irrelevant to the eye of a layman' (ibid.: 87). Ginzburg, however, traces the capacity to interpret clues much further back in human history, namely to when hunters learned to decipher animals' tracks (ibid.: 88-9). He suggests, 'The hunter could have been the first "to tell a story" because only hunters knew how to read a coherent sequence of events from the silent (even imperceptible) signs left by their prey' (ibid.: 89). (I will show that Tiwi hunters had obtained knowledge, inaccessible by other methods, about the homicide in this way.) I would like to take up this point of narration in a hunting society, for Tiwi mortuary rituals are framed as narratives. Before commencing with the ritual, a performer can say, 'I have a lot of stories to tell' (*ngirramini-ingati-nuruwani*, literally, 'story-big mob-I got it'). The concept of *ngirramini*, 'story, talk, word, argument, and trouble', frequently turns up in the context of Tiwi rituals. These stories are then 'told' in ritual performances and, especially, songs. They also can provide clues as to the issues of great concern to the actors, and to the motivations that "keep them going". These stories, as we will see, run through the lives of the narrators and help them shape their culture and adjust to new situations. Therefore, in this respect I do not perceive Tiwi rituals as events with clear-cut beginnings and ends (cf. Seremetakis 1991).[4] In the mortuary rituals the narrators fit their stories into the "frame story" representing the transition of the deceased from the world of the living to the world of the dead, which LeVine (1982) calls the central narrative in death rituals. The song texts were highly metaphorical, only intelligible to outsiders through expert interpretation. Writing about Ilongot hunting stories, Rosaldo makes a similar point: 'In non-literate small-scale societies, story-tellers speak to people who share enormous knowledge about their cultural practices, their landscape, and their past experiences.' As a result of this, details that say little to outsiders provide clues that reveal worlds to the audience for whom they are intended (1986: 108-9).

The Manchester school in British anthropology represents a rich tradition of processual ethnography.[5] Gluckman (1963) developed a more dynamic approach in which he placed conflict alongside custom. Gluckman (1961) and Van Velsen (1967) further designed the extended-case method or situational analysis. Turner elaborated on the dramaturgical idea of social drama as a way to study how a case unfolded over time (1957, 1974). Recently, S.F. Moore has made important contributions (1975, 1986, 1987). She breaks with 'the normality of continuity' (1987: 727). According to Moore, 'A process approach does not proceed from the idea of a received order that is then changed. Process is simply a time-oriented perspective on both continuity and change' (ibid. 729, see also Moore 1975). I follow Moore's suggestion to treat fieldwork as 'current history' with its inherent uncertainties (1987). Moore says about the status of events, 'Events may equally be evidence of the ongoing dismantling of structures or of attempts to create new ones. Events may show a multiplicity of social contestations

and the voicing of competing cultural claims. Events may reveal substantial areas of normative indeterminancy' (ibid.: 729). At issue is 'how to understand the fieldwork time as a moment in a sequence, how to understand the place of the small-scale event in the large historical process, how to look at part-structures being built and torn down' (ibid.: 730). In order to get at these issues, Moore proposes to seek and record 'diagnostic events': 'events that are in no sense staged for the sake of the anthropologist are to be preferred, together with local commentaries on them'; further, 'the kind of event that should be privileged is one that reveals ongoing contests and conflicts and competitions and the efforts to prevent, suppress, or repress these' (ibid.). She admits that in processual ethnography 'observations and interpretations are less neat than those of structuralisms, but there is a concomitant gain in the detailed depiction of the specific and explosive mixture of the contestable and unquestioned in current local affairs' (ibid.).

The homicide case might be seen as a social drama composed of events that all are somehow interrelated. Social dramas, according to Turner, 'are units of aharmonic or disharmonic process, arising in conflict situations' (1974: 37). Turner notes that '[c]onflict seems to bring fundamental aspects of society, normally overlaid by the customs and habits of daily intercourse, into frightening prominence' (ibid.: 35). The choice of representing a special case is a strategic one: Things are out of their usual proportions, and what we thus see is a magnification of what else remains hidden, common sociocultural processes that are underlying behaviour in ordinary cases but difficult to detect in another way. A number of historians - such as Ginzburg (1985[1976]), Thompson (1979), Le Roy Ladurie (1979), N. Davis (1985), and Darnton (1985) - have demonstrated the fruitfulness of such an approach, even if it concerns an atypical or once-only event: a dramatic incident can reveal a whole world, for one can expect things to become manifest that usually remain latent in ordinary life.

I will show that this particular killing very likely was not a mere accident, but that something fundamental was at stake. The victim's life was taken following a series of conflicts, and a number of grievances were held against him. A quality of this case is that it allows us to come to grips with motivations, values and norms in late twentieth-century Tiwi society that relate to putting a fellow human being to death; issues that, therefore, must have the utmost relevance. As we do not have data about the actual act of killing other than circumstantial evidence, the possibility of a mere accident can never be completely excluded. Who actually killed the victim, however, is not of immediate concern here (it is not for me to decide); what is more important is that the case opens up a range of 'cultural possibilities' (Davis 1985: 4; see also Ginzburg 1984: 190, 210-13).

My representation of the case must be understood as a construct, albeit one that attempts to follow the major *dramatis personæ* as closely as it can.

The result is a series of thick descriptions that swing between interpretation and diagnosis, or inscription and specification (Geertz 1973: 27). Geertz states, 'The aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts; to support broad assertions about the role of culture in the construction of collective life by engaging them exactly with complex specifics' (ibid.: 28). For Geertz too, 'small facts speak to big issues' (ibid.: 23), and he further writes that 'it is not necessary to know everything in order to understand something' (1973: 20).

To deal with conflicts as an integral part of social life, and with individual choices between contradictory norms and alternative positions, the extended-case method or situational analysis as described by Van Velsen (1967) is particularly useful. The point of departure is 'that the norms of society do not constitute a consistent and coherent whole': consequently, differing views have to be represented and explained against the situational background of the various actors (ibid.: 146-7). Van Velsen touches on two issues of current anthropological debate: first, the recognition of a multivocality or polyphony and the need to represent multiple voices (Clifford & Marcus 1986); and second, the approach breaks away from the convention, now under scrutiny, of presenting culture as a whole (Thomas 1991). Van Velsen notes that in the kind of fieldwork aimed at describing the social process of choice between often conflicting norms it is necessary to do 'more intensive research within a smaller unit' (ibid.: 145) and 'to record in meticulous detail, the actions of certain specified individuals over a period of time' (ibid.: 143). He further states, 'Such detailed investigation requires the ethnographer's close acquaintance with individuals over a lengthy period of time and a knowledge of their personal histories and their networks of relationships' (ibid.: 145). In using situational analysis the data connected with the homicide are studied within their context. The alternative procedure, according to Bohannan, 'of lifting social or cultural facts out of context and comparing them with other facts also lifted out of context is inadmissible procedure' (1967: 230). His statement is 'directed toward criminologists, who are still lifting crimes from context by comparing crime rates in general or rates of specific crimes - like homicide - in particular, or occasionally of classifying crimes by "motive"' (ibid.: 231). Rates and motives need explanation. Bohannan makes clear that 'studying homicide in terms of "motive" if often only a shorthand for studying social situations in which homicide occurs.'[6] Both, the social situation in which a homicide takes place and the survivors' evaluation of a homicide are strictly speaking not a 'motive' but social phenomena that may influence the course of events before and after the event respectively (ibid.: 230). This is a why the evaluations by Tiwi people of the homicide have to be examined as well for these are embedded within an ongoing social process. These might reflect Tiwi ideas and values.

Malinowski states in *Crime and Custom in Savage Society*, 'The true problem is not to study how human life submits to rules - it simply does not; the real problem is how rules become adapted to life' (1940 [1926]: 127). He

makes clear for the Melanesian people inhabiting the Trobriand Archipelago that these people do not automatically follow their rules; sets of rules might even be in conflict; and there are established ways to circumvent acknowledged indigenous laws. Malinowski formulates his position as follows: 'The actual state of affairs, fully seen and thoroughly understood, is very complex, full of apparent as well as of real contradictions due to the play of the Ideal and its actualization, to the imperfect adjustment between the spontaneous human tendencies and rigid law' (ibid.: 119).[7] We all have to live with these imperfections,[8] the fuzzy aspects of life and uncertainty about the future.

In line with this problem of the contradiction between ideology and practice, Moore (1975) has formulated an analytical model that can be particularly helpful in clarifying the events related to the present homicide case. Moore says we have to start looking at a society as being in flux instead of assuming continuity, a fixed tradition, being its normal condition (see also Moore 1987). Social actors are continuously confronted with uncertainties in situations, if only because every situation is unique and conventional rules do not readily apply to everything. People can only do partially away with this 'factor of indeterminancy' with 'culture and patterned relationships'. In each situation active 'processes of regularization' (often erroneously represented as continuity and taken for granted), actually attempts to fix or hold a situation within a frame demanding the actors' effort, occur in conjunction with necessary 'processes of situational adjustment'. In this way continuity and change are no longer seen in opposition to each other but may be dealt with simultaneously (Moore 1975). In the following chapters we will see these processes and the element of uncertainty in operation in Tiwi society.

The political setting in which anthropologists find themselves in the field, the antropologist as a social actor on the scene, and the politics of writing might be added to the situational background.[9] I take the events concerning the homicide case as 'diagnostic events' and relate these to larger-scale and (also local) long-term historical processes. The narrative framework wherein I describe how the events related to the killing of Tobias Arapi unfolded over time can help to explain the complexity of contemporary Tiwi life (cf. Roth 1989).

1.4 Outline of the thesis

Chapter 2 presents the research setting: its environmental features, social organisation, and social history. This chapter includes a discussion of changes inherent in Tiwi social organisation, the struggle for prestige and influence, the change of a polygamous society into a nominally monogamous one, and the accomodation to wider society. In chapter 3, I relate the life histories of two individuals, the victim and his father. These biographies reflect the particularities that affected the lives of two Tiwi persons within

the broader spectrum of the historical process sketched in the previous chapter. The victim's father, Minapini, was said to have killed four men in an ambush. I follow the representation of this history and its use against the later victim by his opponents at the end of the 1980s. This story in its ethnographical richness offers a good example of how Tiwi sneak attackers operated before the imposition of the Australian legal system. The frequent telling, the stress on the deeds of Minapini, and allusions to the killings at Matalau played a role in the social marginalisation of Minapini's son as a wrongdoer. The chapter ends with a description of the trouble in which the victim was involved shortly before his death. Chapter 4 deals with the initial reactions to the homicide, the police intervention, and the uncertainty about the killer's identity. In chapter 5, I describe the funeral and subsequent purification rituals. Two seasonal yam rituals, one on Melville Island and one on Bathurst Island, dedicated to the victim are discussed in chapter 6. How the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system dealt with the homicide case and the Tiwi perceptions of these proceedings are the subject of chapter 7. Chapter 8 presents the postfuneral rituals for the homicide victim. In chapter 9, I discuss those who were blamed for the homicide by Tiwi, and some cultural possibilities in connection with the case. I draw my conclusions from the homicide case in the final chapter.

2 THE RESEARCH SETTING

2.1 The islands and its people

Melville and Bathurst Islands are located north of the Australian coast in the Timor Sea (see Map 1). Melville Island (5,700 sq. km) is separated from Bathurst Island (2,070 sq. km) to the west by the Apsley Strait. The islands' total land surface is three times that of Luxemburg. The nearest distances to the mainland are approximately 50 km from Melville Island to the south and about 50 km to the east. Directly south of the islands on the mainland is the town of Darwin, the Northern Territory's capital. The Clarence Strait separating the islands from the mainland, with the three little Vernon Islands strung between, is known for its strong currents (Mountford 1956). In the southern entrance to the Apsley Strait, between Nguiu and Paru, the tide tends to fall and rise about seven metres (Priest 1986).

The two tropical islands, eleven degrees south of the equator, are relatively flat except for a small ridge running over Melville Island from the west to the east, dunes in the northwestern point of the island and a few scattered hills in the southeast of Bathurst Island. Both islands are covered with open forest, savannah, swamp and pockets of rain forest. The district Imalu in northwestern Melville Island harbours the largest jungle in the Northern Territory's Top End (Rodney Fendsham, personal communication). Saltwater creeks meander inland from the sea. There are also fresh water streams, ponds, a few falls, and swamps. Mangrove swamps interspersed with cliffs and white sandy beaches dominate the coastline. Sand banks, coral reefs, and islets can be found offshore.

The three major seasons recognised by the Tiwi almost coincide with those distinguished by white people in the monsoonal climate of northern Australia: the dry season (*kumurakini*, 'time of smoke'), the build-up (*tiyara*, 'time of the songs for the cycad palm fruits'), and the wet (*tamutakari*, 'time of the storms'). Furthermore, Tiwi divide these major seasons into thirteen flexible (and at times overlapping) minor seasons that also are characterised by ecological features (e.g., *mumpikari*, 'the time of the muddy possum tracks'). The seasons and the detailed ecological knowledge of Tiwi people played an important role in these people's adaptation to the environment (Stevenson n.d.). Life in the dry season, when people could move out in small groups over the land and hunt unimpaired by the tall grass, was something quite different from life in the rainy season, when people lived in close quarters and conflicts and illness tended to increase.

By all accounts the Tiwi in the pre-contact era lived in a rich environment with an abundance of natural food sources (cf. Hart & Pilling 1960; Goodale 1971). Like other Aboriginal peoples, they were a foraging society. During the twentieth century the Tiwi gradually came to live in three major townships, designed in Western style. Before that they lived dispersed over the islands in semi-nomadic groups. Over the course of this century the Tiwi population has doubled to about 1900 people at the end of the 1980s (see also Jones 1963). The foods obtained by foraging activities still form a substantial part of the diet, although processed foods and other consumables can be bought in the local stores. The Tiwi on their remote islands have not been untouched by the global system and money economy, but like other Aborigines they have retained a distinct way of doing things (cf. Altman 1987; Keen 1988b). The Tiwi, living on the fringe of Anglo-Australian society, accomodated to social and economic change. It must be noted, however, that they, unlike many other Aboriginal groups, have never been forced by colonial occupation to give up their land and natural resources.

In foraging activities there is a division of labour between the sexes but also a considerable overlap (cf. Goodale 1971: 151-4, 1982; Harrison 1986: 160-3). The common stereotype of 'man the hunter' and, consequently, 'woman the gatherer' does not readily fit in with the Tiwi picture. Tiwi women refer to their foraging activities as 'hunting' (*kulalama*), a term that includes gathering and also denotes 'going around' or 'walkabout' (cf. Osborne 1974). Both men and women hunt and gather small marsupials, snakes, lizards, goannas, wild honey, crabs, mangrove worms, and turtle eggs. Mud mussels, oysters, cockles, and whelks are collected more often by women than by men. Men generally do not collect the various species of yams (with one significant exception, the *kulama* yams to be processed in a seasonal ritual) or cycad palm fruits. Almost exclusively, males hunt wallabies, buffaloes, pigs, turtles, dugongs, crocodiles, flying foxes, and magpie geese. Fruits, such as wild plums and apples, are taken by anyone who encounters them ready to eat in the bush. Men fish off the reefs and in the creeks, although fishing is not an exclusively male affair anymore. Women can fish with hand line and hook from the shore (cf. Harrison 1986: 160). Goodale asserts that in the past there was a more rigid sexual division of labour. She relates this to a gender division of space in the Tiwi language: Items exclusively foraged by women were in the male domain and vice versa (1982: 202-3).[10] In spite of this perhaps ideological division, women extracted the main part of the food from the mangrove swamps which, linguistically speaking, are feminine in gender. In terms of quantity and productivity, women were the main providers. As members of polygamous establishments they usually cooperated in extracting bush and sea foods. Of course, some individuals were more successful in the food quest than others. A person with good foraging skills, irrespective of sex, has prestige in Tiwi society.

When women and men alike came across smaller animals they would kill them using sticks. The men, depending on age and physical condition, had greater physical strength than most women. Little children could be left behind in camp in the care of elderly women and men. Nothwithstanding that among the men there were a large number of bachelors, they could always rely on the food brought together by female relatives, their mothers in particular (cf. Hart & Pilling 1960; Hart 1970). Men could engage in the less reliable endeavour of hunting larger game. The right to employ techniques for killing larger mobile animals, and humans, was reserved for men. Unlike the women, they utilized carved throwing sticks and a variety of spears in hunting and fishing. Nowadays guns and harpoons, again used only by men, have replaced most types of spears and all throwing sticks in 'hunting'. Spears and throwing sticks were also used in combat by men only. Spears were the almost exclusive weapon in killings by sneak attackers (*kwampi*), who were always men (cf. Pilling 1958). The killing of human beings, culturally sanctioned by the institution of sneak attacks, was a male preserve.

Tiwi people had an extended body of knowledge they applied in the management of their natural resources. Stevenson writes that the preference to employ a detailed species/habitat taxonomy mainly based on use indicates how they were geared to making a living from an intricate mosaic of ecosystems. Tiwi knowledge of waterways and of the tides, their favoured exploitation of 'ecosystems close to drainage lines', and their use of forest fire as 'a major management tool' support this thesis. The burning of tall grasses in the dry season, applied with variable frequency and intensity, enlarged the number and pattern of ecological niches (1985). Hart describes how large groups of people cooperated in grass-burning and lived off the freed resources of game for several weeks (Hart & Pilling 1960). In exploiting environmental resources the detailed knowledge of seasonal changes and the corresponding availability and edibility of plants and animals were also important.

Exploitation of the environment was related to territorial affiliations, membership within the districts into which the islands are divided (e.g., the members of Rangku identify themselves as Rangkuwila). Those who belonged to a particular district had free access to its resources; others had to gain their permission (in the recent past there have been a few cases in which influential men tabooed an area for others). Membership in such a 'country' (*murukupupuni*) could be obtained in numerous ways, in particular by birth or residence in the area, father's membership, or when an ancestral grave was situated there (cf. Hart 1970). Within a 'country' a smaller group of people, a patrilineal descent group, could have more specific rights in a sub-district (*tungarima*) because it had been their country before and gone up in a larger whole, or the specific territorial affiliation being a result of the presence of a father's or grandfather's grave which gave the patrilineal descendants rights in the surrounding area. The size and number of the countries, as well as their boundaries, changed over time (cf.

Pilling 1958). This was a result of demographic and political processes and had to do with the management of land and personnel.[11] Before Tiwi went to live in the townships there were large encampments headed by influential senior men with large polygynous households. When an area became too densely populated, such senior men could send their younger brothers away to a vacant or thinly populated area to found a new country. People also shifted to other countries to obtain or join marriage partners. Men usually acquired membership in the country where they resided, while women still belonged to their father's country even when their residence was elsewhere.

Spiritual links with the land are important. Spiritual conception takes place when a father (sometimes FZ, FF or FFZ) dreams of spirit children (*putaputuwi*) in his country. Patrilineal identifications such as dances (choreographed by men in one's patrilineage) and the *irumwa* or 'dreamings' (emblems of the patrilineage inherited from one's father and mostly, not always, including the father's and father's sister matrilineal clan association, *imunga*) mark species and environmental features characteristic of a country. People face their countries in ritual, and ritual calls of burial place names and their mentioning in song texts are further examples of people's expression of belonging to the land and to their countries. In Tiwi eschatology the spirits of the dead (*mopadruwi*) are supposed to go to where the spirits of their actual and classificatory fathers and father's fathers 'live'; that is, their burial places. Because of these burial places populated by patrilineal spirits, the descendants have rights in these areas. When the living come to these territories they identify themselves by calling out to the spirits of the dead and stressing the particular kin relationship. The spirits can be asked to assist in hunting and many other favours. When an influential man who has many offspring dies, his patrilineal grandchildren can form a social grouping, a 'one-grandfather-group' (*aminiyarti*). Such a group has a special solidarity and is considered a 'company' or 'fight company' as its members join in fights. They hold rights in the area of burial of their common father's father, and in the past such a group could occupy a 'country' or a sub-district (also called 'country'). Patrilineal descent is thus important in relation to territorial rights.

When the passage of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* of 1976 granted the Tiwi the islands as their land, they decided that they did not want to be represented by the Northern Land Council, which operated from the mainland, but formed a separate land council to represent the islands, the Tiwi Land Council. It became necessary to determine where people had territorial rights in a country and how many of these countries had to be represented. After internal negotiations, twelve countries were listed to which Tiwi people were assigned 'traditional ownership'. In 1981 the number of countries was renegotiated, and two years later this resulted in a list of seven countries as some countries merged. Each of these countries had its own delegates to the land council (Hart, Pilling & Goodale 1988: 130-4). The 'final' list of countries (ibid.: 132) still existed in 1988-1990. The seven countries were Murnupwi, Malau, Rangku, Tikelaru,

Wulurangku, Impinari, and Mandiupwi (see Map 3) The countries seemed to have become fixed. In 1991, however, negotiations began for a rearrangement and division of some countries. When I left the islands in November 1991, no decisions had yet been made.

The flexibility required by local political processes made it difficult for Tiwi people to comply with the demands of Anglo-Australian law. Hart's analysis of 'the struggle for prestige and influence' among the Tiwi is basic to an understanding of this society.[12] In the next section I will summarise his argument and briefly discuss some of the aspects of the gerontocratic polygyny.

2.2 The struggle for prestige and influence

Hart analysed 'the prestige and influence system' as it operated among Tiwi living in the bush at the end of the 1920s (Hart & Pilling 1960: 51-77). At that time Catholic missionaries and Japanese pearl divers had had comparatively little impact on the marriage practices of people in the northern part of Bathurst Island, the country Malau where Hart conducted fieldwork. According to Hart, Tiwi were involved in a struggle for prestige and influence over others to which they devoted most of their lives: 'The "game" was one of trying to win friends and increase prestige and influence over others. The "assets", in a tribe with such minimal material possessions as the Tiwi, were mostly intangible ones such as friendship, "help", goodwill, respect of others, control over others, importance, and influence' (ibid.: 52). Success in one's efforts could be measured by the possession of surplus food. This not only enabled the possessor to make gifts and hence create dependencies, but also gave him time to devote to social, ceremonial, and political life. Beyond the food that was given by the men's wives to their close relatives, the distribution of food was controlled by men. A surplus of food could only be brought together by a female 'workforce'. So in the end it was control over women on which a man's success in gaining prestige and influence heavily depended. As Hart puts it, 'Women were the main currency of the influence struggle, the main "trumps" in the endless bridge game' (ibid.). In order to become influential, ambitious Tiwi men strived to establish polygynous households; the acquisition of wives was a main objective of a man's political carreer. For this he needed other men who were in the right position to give him, directly or indirectly, or to promise him future wives. Hart distinguishes two general means for men to obtain wives, by bestowal and widow remarriage.

Bestowal was the most prestigeous and difficult way to get a wife. It meant the promise of a future daughter of a young woman when she had her first menses. If a man had a wife bestowed on him, it would still be a number of years before she could join him, if everything went right. Only fully initiated men were to have wives. Hart states that men began competing for wives in their twenties, after the lengthy initiation procedures. He

estimates that on average a man was between 35 and 40 years old before he could actually receive a first wife in this fashion. The practice of bestowal accounted for a considerable difference in age between marriage partners. It must be noted that the accomplishment and time of the actual delivery of bestowed wives involved a good deal of politicking. Hart points out that there was always something that could go wrong. One way of improving a man's chances of obtaining a wife was for him to live in the establishment of the donors as their political client. (An 'establishment', in Hart's terms, was a self-contained food-producing encampment within a country.) In any case, this made the man in question for a very long period dependent on his donors, who aspired to get all they could out of the deal too (Hart & Pilling 1960).

In principle, female babies were thus married off before they were born. Women always remarried whenever their husbands died; prolonged widowhood simply did not exist in Tiwi society.Young men had a better chance to acquire an old widow than a bestowed woman as their first wife. At the death of an old polygynist a substantial number of women could marry other men. Young initiated men were then sometimes able to obtain the eldest widows, who were less valued in the influence struggle by the senior men. These elderly women proved to be useful persons to set up a household with. A senior woman was a skilled food producer herself who could instruct and guard the younger wives eventually added to her new husband's household. By marrying a widow, the husband became the stepfather of her previous children. He had the right to rename them, and in doing so replaced their father. Consequently, he was entitled to have a say in the arrangement of new marriages of the widow's daughters and the bestowal of her future daughter's daughters. At the same time, whenever he could he would try to use secondary rights in the marriages of his close female relatives - sisters, sisters' daughters, and mothers - as 'assets' in the influence struggle. The politically skillful young man, therefore, acted as an agent for others or on his own behalf in marriage politics to enlarge his influence and prestige. Initial successes in this realm would likely attract more success, as senior influential men tended to favour young up-and-coming men as their political clients rather than their contemporaries and main competitors. As a result of this, a man's later success would be decided on by his political achievements when he was in his thirties. For most of these men, marrying an elderly widow was a prerequisite to start a political career and to succeed in the formation of an extended polygamous household. They became even more influential when they fathered daughters of their own and could bestow their daughters' female offspring.

Tiwi men had varying degrees of success in this struggle for influence. Political achievements depended on age and ability, on networking and gaining maximal returns from one's 'assets', and also on cooperation with their womenfolk who became clever politicians in their own right as they grew older. Many men remained bachelors all their lives. Only a happy few succeeded in founding an establishment of their own. More often than not an

establishment was dominated by senior brothers working together, 'a multi-adult cooperation' based on the pooling of their interests. In the vicinity of an establishment satellite camps could exist. These smaller camps relied in part on the surplus food produced by members of the main camp. Throughout the year, the camps in a country shifted in accordance with the food quest, partially determined by seasonal changes and exploitation of the various habitats. Most of the time, life centred on these camps. Larger groups of people gathered once in a while, which could involve crossing country boundaries, for cooperative hunts (at grass-burning time), battles, seasonal rituals, and postfuneral rituals. Senior men in particular participated in these activities, which granted them opportunities to socialise with others, to settle disputes, and above all to enlarge their prestige and influence.

These were thus occasions of intense sociability and politicking for people who did not see much of each other otherwise. The senior men - described as gerontocrats by Hart and Pilling (1960) - appeared to be concerned with both marriage politics and keeping the younger men in line. From their early teens until their mid-twenties, Tiwi men were kept apart as initiates from their families and others. Caught by surprise and kidnapped from camp, the male initiate was subordinated to an older brother-in-law who instructed him and guided him through the seven grades of initiation. During initiation the youngsters stayed out in the bush for lengthy periods of time. They were subjected to taboos such as not eating food with their own hands and not having sexual intercourse. For the rest of his life a male initiate was indebted to his instructor. The initiate was seized at the behest of his father, of whom the instructor, the initiate's brother-in-law, of course was a political client. He had married a sister of the initiate and for that reason he was also partially indebted to him. The initiation of males served, among other things, to discipline the young men. Their physical separation from the main camps and the taboo on sexual intercourse ideally kept these young men away from the women. Their female age-mates were married to much older men.

There were many bachelors in Tiwi society, which allowed for a number of senior men to have exceptionally large polygamous households. Hart asserts that this 'compulsory celibacy did not, of course, mean chastity.' The environment of forest and mangrove swamps was favourable for them to have sexual relationships with married women. Abduction of women, however, was extremely rare because as a result of the isolation of the islands an eloped couple would soon be caught and confronted. Hart states,

> Tiwi bachelors had to be satisfied, by and large, with casual and temporary liaisons and even in these, because of constant suspicion of the old husbands and the constant spying and scandalmongering of the old wives, they had to be prepared to be often caught and, when caught, to be punished. (ibid.: 80)

When detected or under serious suspicion a man had 'to stand for spear' or, to avoid this, move away from the area. In a formal 'duel' the husband

threw a volley of spears at the man who allegedly had made him a cuckold; the matter ended when he was hit (ibid.: 80-3). According to Hart, these duels were 'their only formula for settling disputes, and these occasionally became sufficiently broadened to warrant being called warfare' (ibid.: 83). He writes that Tiwi battles were always unpredictable and inconclusive because in the end the grievances were between individuals, and support was not easy to predict because of the many latent cross-cutting ties between people. On the battlefield a man 'was pretty much on his own, even though he had arrived there as a member of a large war party. This situation stemmed from the coexistence, on the one hand, of the intricate web of kinship that united everybody present and made the problem of who would support whom unpredictable enough, and, on the other hand, the intricate network of deals and promises and personal alliances and obligations that every senior Tiwi man had woven inside the kinship system' (ibid. 85-6). Perhaps a few initial disputes would be settled, but the proceedings of the fight likely resulted in even more new disagreements and grievances. The events were related to everyone 'in minute detail' and led to re-assessments of the state of affairs. People who had not been present also took happenings unfavourable for them into account: 'These they would weave into their own strategies and store up for future use' (ibid.: 87). Hart summarises the results of the Tiwi struggle for influence and prestige as follows:

> The 'haves' left a small minority of females to the 'have-not' men to keep them quiet, but the great majority of females were concentrated in the hands of a few old men and these old men chose their own successors. Thus the Tiwi system actually deserves to be called a primitive oligarchy as much as it deserves to be called a gerontocracy. It was run by a few old men who ruled it not so much because they were old but because as young men they had been clever and then had lived long enough to reap the rewards of their cleverness. These rewards made up Tiwi wealth - many wives, much leisure, many daughters to bestow, many satellites and henchmen, and much power and influence over other people and tribal affairs. (ibid.: 77)

In short, Hart argues that the isolation of the islands and the large food supply of the environment enabled the development of a social, economic, and political system controlled by a number of senior men, heads of large polygamous households, on the basis of their political achievements. The gerontocrats could keep the male youngsters in check by the lengthy initiation procedures, temporarily excluding them from marital life and, because the abundance of food permitted it, 'the removal from the food-production units, for long periods of the year, of all the young males between the ages of 14 and 25': the costs of the loss of food production by young hunters were weighed up against them being 'out of the predatory-bachelor force' chasing the senior men's wives (ibid.: 95). In Hart's analysis, Tiwi gerontocratic polygyny rested on the production of surplus food by female workforces, the main providers. This left the senior men who presided over or controlled a large number of women free to spend their time on political dealings and 'leisure' activities, that is, the composition of songs, choreography of dances, and production of ceremonial paraphenalia

(mortuary poles and carved spears) to increase their prestige and influence in the ritual domain. With the surplus food they could maintain the population of their large establishments and create further dependencies in others. Closely related women, wives, and these women's female offspring were also key political resources themselves, 'assets' in the long-term politicking of ambitious men to obtain ever more wives and political clients, and, therewith, more prestige and influence (ibid.: passim).

Discussion

Influential Tiwi men could obtain an exceptionally large number of wives; the successful ones counted between twenty and thirty women as their wives. It must be noted, however, that not all these wives lived with their husband at one time (some never did). The number of wives, an index of prestige, included promised wives not even born or still in the care of their mothers, the wives actually living with their husband (this could amount to ten or twelve women), and deceased wives (Hart & Pilling 1960: 17). All females were married, whereas males usually did not obtain a first wife until they were in their thirties, and they did so only if they fared well.

Older men could thus accumulate many wives because the sex ratio of married people was very uneven (cf. Maddock 1986: 68): while the number of married men was lessened by prolonged (and sometimes life-long) bachelorhood and a very substantial delay of their marriages, the number of married women was carried to its absolute extreme, with no age restriction.

Although Hart acknowledges that women could become clever politicians in their own right when they grew older (Hart & Pilling 1960: 53), he pays relatively little attention to the interests of females. Rose argues that polygyny was in the interest of females, for as co-wives they could share in the burden of looking after children, the older wives could instruct the younger ones, and their marriage to a much older man had economic advantages because these men 'were the most experienced paterfamilias by virtue of being the most effective organisers of production and distribution' (1987: 204-5, passim). From Rose's Marxist perspective, the mode of production in Aboriginal societies is basic. To support his argument he claims that Aborigines considered woman primarly as 'economic subjects', not 'sexual objects'. He goes on to say that '[t]he actual sexual relations between men and women were for the Aborigines of little consequence, and their apparent lack of sexual jealousy can be understood in the light of this fact' (ibid.: 36). As far as the Tiwi are concerned, I cannot agree with his assertion about the lack of sexual jealousy (see chapters 5 and 8; see for a discussion of sexual jealousy in another Aboriginal society Burbank 1980: 85-9) for Tiwi themselves put a strong emphasis on sexual jealousy (*tulura* or *mantupungari*). By this I do not want to say that Tiwi men regard women as 'sexual objects' (besides, people are not seen as objects) in the first place. Nevertheless, Tiwi men place a high value on women. Their role in economic production might be one reason, their role in human reproduction another.

Hart appears to give priority to the senior men's control of food production over their control of human reproduction. Hiatt suggests that it 'might be that production is the servant of reproduction, not the reverse; and that men in hunter/gatherer society are no less impelled to achieve reproductive success than men in agricultural society' (1985: 44). Comparing polygamous African agriculturalists to Australian Aboriginal foragers he states, 'what needs to be explained is why relations of reproduction in the two cases seem indifferent to differences in the mode of production' (ibid.).[13] An examination of the advantages of Tiwi gerontocratic polygyny in terms of promotion of inclusive fitness is beyond the scope of this work. In many ways it represents an example social scientists working with theories derived from sociobiology (e.g., Daly & Wilson 1988; Chagnon 1988) would dream of, but it has to await further discussion.

Other explanations have been given regarding how some men could marry so many wives and keep the younger men from marrying (cf. Warner 1958; Maddock 1986; Keen 1982; Burbank 1988; and Keen 1988b for further references and discussion). Probably, as Keen makes clear, 'the complex interplay of a variety of factors has to be invoked' (1982: 621). One of these factors is the formal kinship system. Among the Tiwi the preferential rule of marriage entailed a trend for men to 'marry down', to marry younger wives (besides in his own generation the ideal potential spouses were to be found in the second descending generation from the male ego), and therewith favoured the older men.

Another factor relevant in the Tiwi context is the practice of male initiation in the pre-mission era. The annual yam rituals were major events in the promotion through seven grades of initiation for young women and men alike. Nevertheless, the lengthy initiation procedures only had an effect on the men's age of marriage. The women were already married from the day they were born, so to speak. The young men were treated differently (and had other instructors); males and females went through only some elements of the initiation together. The young men were not allowed to marry until their initiation was completed and they were 'free men', probably in their twenties. Keen infers from Goodale (1971) that '[i]n Tiwi society there was no clear correlation between ritual induction and the age of marriage' (1988b: 95; see also Maddock 1986: 125, 141). He is correct with regard to Goodale's data concerning the situation in 1954, but at that time the marriage politics of the Bathurst Island Catholic mission had already undermined the Tiwi gerontocracy. Uninitiated and not fully initiated young men could obtain women of about their own age ('bought' from older men and raised at the mission) as wives from the missionaries, provided that they allowed their children to become Catholics and that they would have only one wife. The Catholic missionaries also introduced other values, supported monogamous couples, and were able to enforce their own laws and Anglo-Australian law (they could rely on white police and the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system). Hence, the young men could no

longer be kept from marrying. At the Bathurst Island mission there was a 'complete ecclesiastical ban' (Mountford 1958: 60) of the 'pagan' initiation and mortuary rituals at that time (cf. Fallon 1991; Gsell 1956). The former rule that men had to remain bachelors until they were fully initiated was dropped. Tiwi people accepted the marriages of younger men as a fact of life, and as they grew older some of them were initiated after all. Pragmatically, the initiation procedures were shortened and limited to the performances of the yam ritual wherein the participating men did not 'marry'; that is, they slept apart from their wives. Tiwi call this initiation 'short-cut' and it must be seen as very different from the situation in the pre-mission period when all men were kept from marrying until they had completed initiation. The high incidence of polygyny had ceased to exist. In the earlier period there was a direct connection between ritual induction and the delayed age of marriage of men. The 'short-cut' initiation appears to be necessary to continue the performance of the seasonal yam ritual, which has many other aspects and which will be discussed in chapter 6.

In addition to the men's prolonged bachelorhood as a result of the initiation procedures, their age at first marriage was delayed because it was only after initiation that they could engage in marriage politics. Warner has argued that the deaths of many young men in 'warfare' among Aborigines in Arnhem Land was necessary for the older men to have many wives (1958: 147). Keen, on the basis of Warner's calculations, points out that for northeast Arnhem Land the death toll from fighting lessened 'the male population of marriageable age only by about 2.2 per cent' (1982: 633-4). It seems not have had the effect Warner suggested. Among the Tiwi there was also a high homicide rate as a result of fights and sneak attacks in the pre-mission period (cf. chapter 1; Pilling 1958). Possibly, the high level of violence functioned to maintain the gerontocratic polygyny as a means of deterrence. I also recorded, however, cases of older polygynists being killed by younger men in order to obtain their wives (and such deaths of course released many remarriageable women). Therefore, it cuts both ways.

I have no doubt that Tiwi struggled for prestige and influence at the end of the 1980s as much as they did sixty years earlier. In between, concerning the situation in 1954, Goodale found that '[p]ersonal achievement appears to be the dominant value for which Tiwi males and females strive during their existence in the world of the living' (1971: 337). I now turn to a discussion of Tiwi social organisation, which permits considerable flexibility and leaves room for political manoeuvring.

2.3 Social organisation

A Tiwi person belongs (via the mother) to a 'skin group' or *imunga* which can be conceived of an exogamous matrilineal clan (cf. Pilling 1958: 51).[14] (Goodale calls it a matrilineal sib, 1971: 71). Such a clan often bears several

names designating its particular associations. The people of the Pandanus clan or *miartiwi*, for instance, are also called *jikikuwi* (white cockatoo people) and *murupuwila* (people of Murupu, a sacred hill site in the southeast of Bathurst Island). Tiwi describe the clans as grouped together in several clusters that are ideally exogamous. Within these clusters, some clans tend to be seen as more closely related than others. The alignment of the clans depends on the history of exchange of marriage partners, in which patterns of cooperation between mutually exogamous clans and reciprocity with other (aligned) marriageable clans emerged. The grouping of clans therefore is in constant flux (cf. Pilling 1958: 52; Brandl 1971: 86, 92). It is better to adopt a processual approach towards their organisation than to see them as fixed structures. The marriage politics of influential men in the past sometimes led to decisions by such men to merge two clans or to form a new clan out of a segment from an older clan. These men were powerful enough to bend the rules to justify unconventional marriages or to broaden their scope to exchange marriage partners. However, a 'law' made by such an influential man (*arulukani*) did not always take hold, nor was it necessarily acknowledged by all members of the merged clans (cf. Pilling 1958; Brandl 1971). Consequently, no general agreement on the precise alignment of the clans and their membership exists.

Spencer (1914), Hart (1930), and Harney and Elkin (1943) recorded a three-way division of the clans. Later researchers found a division of four or five groupings (Berndt & Berndt 1988: 66-8; Pilling 1958; Goodale 1971; Brandl 1971; Grau 1983). Pilling notes that a fourth grouping resulted from the segmentation of one of the major groups recorded by Hart. In 1949, an influential man named Cabbagee (called Prumeialumirri by my informants) declared that three clans formed a new grouping, *takaringuwi* (mullet people), after a series of killings and rivalries (Pilling 1958: 60-1, 338-42). Tobias, the later homicide victim, who described the *takaringuwi* as 'one body, one group' (because his father belonged to this grouping it meant for him, he said, that these people 'call me son'), explained the alignment of the clans to me by drawing lines in the sand with a little stick. Each line represented a matrilineal clan. He put the lines together in five groups, one of which consisted of a single line that stood for the *antaluwi* (fresh water clan); other people placed the *kurawi* (bloodwood sap clan) in this group too. Both clans are set apart because of their irregular marriage patterns.[15] It is tempting to leave the exceptions aside and to speak of moieties with regard to the broad (although incomplete and time-bound) dual division of the clans, and of semi-moieties with regard to the four main groupings (even less stable, and within them some clans considered as more closely related than others), two on each side. Pilling (1958) and Goodale (1971) have done so, but these matrilineal 'moieties' and 'semi-moieties' are nothing like, for instance, the patrilineal moieties and semi-moieties found in Arnhem Land. Therefore, not to add too much

to the confusion, I will call these groupings of the matrilineal clans quasi-moieties and quasi-semi-moieties, respectively.

Tiwi call the members of mutually exogamous clans *aramipi* or 'relations', ranging from the members of one other clan to members of all those clans with whom one's own clan ideally does not exchange marriage partners (one's quasi-semi-moiety and one's quasi-moiety). Closely allied clans can and do fulfill obligations for each other ('helping out'). Ideally, 'relations' support each other physically (join in fights), materially (supply food, money, services and goods), and verbally ('speak up' for one another).

For demographic and other reasons (e.g., realignments of clans), people are unevenly distributed between the clans in terms of numbers, ages, and genders. Members of a single clan can have an exchange of marriage partners with more than one other clan. Clans cooperate in fulfilling obligations resulting from this exchange of marriage partners, but they also compete in trying to obtain partners from other clans with whom they can marry (and this appeared to be amendable). A realignment of clans can contradict the accomplishment of an exchange arranged in the past, for example, when a partner is expected to be given in return in the next generation. For a set of actual siblings the exchange relations are traced historically. Let me give one example: I witnessed a fight after a man, married to a woman of clan X, had obtained another woman of clan Y. His mother's mother had been married with a man of clan Y but she eloped with a man of clan X. Their daughter married into clan X and as a result the daughter's son got a woman of clan X. The mother's mother's sister decided the fight by declaring (to her sister's daughter's son), 'You mob didn't go [to clan Y] first.' In other words, because of the shift in exchange relations, the man was not entitled to have a woman of clan Y. The mother's mother's sister's son, however, married a woman of clan Y. This matriline continued the extant pattern of an exchange of partners with clan Y, whereas the daughter's son of a woman who had eloped with a man of clan X was not allowed to return to this pattern. This case also illustrates that senior women can be forceful and clever politicians.

The matriclan is exogamous. As a preferential rule of marriage one marries into one's father's matriclan, the clan where one 'comes out' (referring to the father's sister). Furthermore, one's own and the alternate generation levels (the second ascending generation from ego, the second descending generation from ego, and so forth) are conceived of as one generation, and are ideally endogamous (cf. Pilling 1958: 73). A Tiwi male ideally marries his 'mother's brother's daughter' (*mawana*) but rather a distant classificatory one than an actual mother's brother's daughter, whereas a female's first preference is to marry her 'father's sister's son' (*amini*). The second preference is for a female to marry her 'mother's brother's son' (*mawanyini*) and for a male to marry his 'father's sister's daughter' (*amoa*).[16] Brandl found that the terminology used - *mawana* being a potential spouse of a male's own generation or the second descending

generation; *amini* being a potential spouse of a female's own generation or the second ascending generation - points at a trend of men 'marrying down' (in the second descending generation rather than the second ascending generation from ego), which in the past privileged the older men and limited the number of women younger men could marry (1971: 188-93). Furthermore, senior men were owed the respect of their juniors, who were thus in a weaker position to press marriage claims.[17]

The exchange of marriage partners between matrilineal clans is called *keramili* or 'change 'em over'. I was told that *keramili* happened to be a word from Croker Island, 'but we use it now'. (Aborigines from Croker Island and the Cobourg Peninsula worked as buffalo hunters on Melville Island and intermarried with Tiwi; see the next section.) Before this term was imported, phrases from the song language were used, such as, 'What about me? I want your sister!' or something to that effect.[18] It is in songs in the ritual context that 'word [the grievance] comes out'. Female informants said that on part of the men in the rituals there is 'always worrying', 'worrying about this girl-business': the men are preoccupied with marriage politics. The skilled male song composers even use to utter intimidating threats, 'worst thinking big-headed'. According to my informants, siblings with the same mother can give their daughter's daughters (female speaking) away to a set of brothers of a matriclan with which there are marriage exchange relations. In other words, the mother and mother's brother of a woman can make her a mother-in-law (*amprinua*, a reciprocal term) of a set of brothers. The latter then call their mother-in-law's mother and her mother's brother *umpuruteri* and *imporeterini* respectively (in the context of alternate generations, the future wife and these people in the second ascending generation from her are conceived of as conceptually one; they are 'same company'). The relationship with *umpuruteri* and *imporeterini* is one of respect; when they are spoken to it has to be sensible talk, no nonsense or 'gammon'. This is in contrast to brothers-in-law (*inyimini*) and sisters-in-law (*inyiminga*) who in a kind of joking relationship exchange verbal abuse (the swearing words have to be thrown back, as it were: 'What about you? You f- etc.'). The mother-in-law's mother's mother can decide whom of the brothers (not necessarily the eldest, especially when they are close in age, although Tiwi do make distinctions between younger and elder brothers that often privilege the elder) as 'number one' will get her daughter's daughter ('same company' with her) as mother-in-law; that is, who 'comes first' to obtain the mother-in-law's daughter as future wife. She declares this when her daughter's daughter is still prepubescent. She thus can connect a specific male with his mother-in-law. These arrangements follow the lines of preferential marriage rules and are still made.

In the past - it has become very rare nowadays - there was a ritual in which such an arrangement, including the successive rights of the brothers, was confirmed. This ritual ('making big girl'), *muringelata* (also the female age grade term), was held with a woman's first menses (cf. Hart 1928/29;

Goodale 1971: 50-1).[19] The woman, no matter whether she was still a baby or a little child, was then already married (or could be married) and slept with her husband. His older wives looked after her. He judged by looking at her back if she was grown enough to have sex with her. Next he took her away from camp, to 'make her happy'. When she had her first period, her sons-in-law were asked to come. Her father gave the son-in-law a two-sided barbed spear, representing a female child.[20] Before that the father had placed the spear between his daughter's legs ('made road clear'), slept with his daughter with the spear in between them, and at times while holding the spear on his chest embraced ('nursed') the spear as if it was a baby. If the son-in-law eventually did not get his promised wife, 'lose 'em', he could kill the obstructors using the spear. The important thing was that the pubescent woman could have children. This was marked in the ritual by her husband and his brothers. The husband made 'room' for his brothers and invited them to throw a goose-feather ball (standing for a child) at her back; he himself threw last. She had to run to a tree (sometimes associated with her father's clan) where her husband grabbed her. The tree had been marked on beforehand by the husband and his brothers by throwing little sticks at it. Songs were performed during the ritual but in a different style than those in the mortuary rituals or the yam ritual. The girl was whipped (*putrepurungeruni*, not unlike the whipping that can take place in mortuary ritual, *malapwara*). This is a common feature of rites of passage (Van Gennep 1960). I was told it was done 'so we don't get sick'. The woman sat down at the tree and got a ritual bath. After three periods the woman had gone through the ritual. Her husband could dream of a spirit child and then she was expected to have a baby.[21]

Goodale (1962; 1971) distinguishes several types of 'marriage contracts', but notes that 'in every type of contract one primary factor will influence the ultimate choice of a woman's husband: that of being assured or hopeful that a reciprocal contract can and will be made' (1971: 114). The type A contract, according to Goodale, encompassed every female's first marriage and was arranged by her mother's father and her future husband at the time of her mother's first menses, before she herself had been born. The other types of marriage contracts could only follow on this ideal and most prestigeous one (from a male point of view) and resulted in a woman's later marriages. Derived from this contract is type A2, when a brother of the prospective husband gets the woman after the initial husband's death. Type A3 leaves the original contract intact, but the husband passes the wife to another man.[22] Type B is a father-arranged contract, and type B2 occurs when the husband passes the wife to a brother before he dies. Type C is arranged by the woman's brothers. Type D is arranged by the sons (de jure, but de facto possibly by the mother). Type E is elopement, arranged by bride and groom (1971: 54-7). I recorded cases of all types except type D, for which Goodale also has no evidence (but see Hart & Pilling 1960: 53). When asked, my informants denied this type of marriage deal occurred or could happen.

At the end of the 1980s the term 'promise' for a promised wife was used in both strict and rather broad senses. It could mean a man expected a wife to be given by another clan or quasi-semi-moiety in return, and therefore was his 'promise'. It could also refer to a classical marriage deal. The idea of an exchange was underlying these marriage deals.[23] Men still had female toddlers promised as wives to them. In a number of cases wives resisted their husbands having more than one wife (one woman argued that the 'mission blocked that') and in other cases wives assisted their husbands in enforcing their rights. Only a few men actually lived together with more than one wife. What persisted from the era of extreme polygyny were marriage politics, the resultant webs of arrangements binding people, and lover relationships.

Men have to support their mothers-in-law (and their husbands in addition) in providing them with money, goods, services, and so forth. The relationship with a mother-in-law is an avoidance relationship out of respect. She is not directly addressed or openly spoken to by her son-in-law (she can, however, make demands when no one else is present as an in-between, and the son-in-law may give her things by putting a hand around the arm with which he gives). They can speak with each other, but only softly (*mamana*). The same accounts for another important avoidance relationship, the relationship between brothers and sisters (with the exception of the very young and the elder) who have a mother, mother's mother or mother's mother's mother in common. They use intermediaries and a 'different language' between them. They face away and point their lips elsewhere in talking, pretend to speak to someone else or, for instance, when a sister is sitting alone her brother attracts her attention by calling out *awi*, 'Hey!' in plural, instead of *aga*, 'Hey!' to a female. Brothers can draw on their sisters' resources and have secondary rights in their marriages. Sisters nowadays also act as chaperones of their brothers' wives and girlfriends (hence, the identity of the girlfriend is a public secret). The brothers' wives hold their sisters-in-law responsible for the fidelity of their - the brothers' wives' - husbands. When a man, who invested in a mother-in-law, does not obtain his promised wives because they married other men or remained single, his 'promises' have in turn to give him money, beer, goods, and so on. Men who have a love tryst with a woman give her beer and money. The lover relationships (cf. Berndt & Berndt 1988; Burbank 1988; Hiatt 1965) follow the rules of an exchange of partners or 'change 'em over'. These informal relationships are mostly affairs with potential spouses (by exception a classificatory father's sister, although it is frowned upon). A female informant told me that '[e]very woman got to have one husband and one boyfriend'. The contradictions of this informal system with the formal one are expressed by Tiwi with humour (when one is not involved). An old joke, dating back to the days of 'gerontocratic polygyny', tells about an old polygynist with many young wives. The wives returned back to camp with mangrove worms after they had been foraging in the mangrove swamps.

(The mangrove worms are taken out of fallen logs. It demands physical strength to chop off a piece of wood, so men usually cut off a longer piece and therefore collect longer worms.) The old man inspected the worms collected by his wives. One attractive young wife had returned with exceptionally long worms. The next day he told her to stay in camp with him. The point, of course, is that she had been in the mangroves with a lover. Ideas about romantic love have been introduced to Tiwi society. The English word 'love' cannot be directly translated in Tiwi. What comes close is the word for a man who likes a woman, *purantjiarnmoi*, or a woman who likes a man, *purantjiaromonei*. Among people in their forties and younger the word for play, also meaning erotic play, *wulintjini*, has gained currency. It is used in the sense of 'muck around', and further has the ordinary meaning of play, and laugh or smile.[24]

Within the broad constraints of the kinship system individuals stressed a network of kin relationships and downplayed other kin relationships. It was not always possible to stick to the rules in marriage politics, and then sometimes people manoeuvered others by tracing them via other people in a suitable kin relationship (see also Hiatt 1965). In a context wherein everyone had ties of kinship with all others, it came down to the specifics of choices. It thus depends on how those ties are used, what people in the practice of everyday life do with these, and if a mutual understanding is ignored a conflict can arise. With regard to the situation in 1928-1929 Hart notes that '[i]t seemed that the primary purpose of a kinship system is to promote ease and prevent strain in everyday, face-to-face living, and the other aspects of kinship and clanship are secondary or subordinate to that primary purpose' (1979: 125). Williams, in her study of disputes in an Aboriginal community in northeast Arnhem Land, clearly states that the kinship terms there, to a certain extent, were also negotiable:

> The contractual nature of the obligations is indicated by the fact that each individual can specify through several equally accurate genealogical links kin-named relationships with any other individual except parents and full siblings. The agreement of two or more people to use a given set of kin reciprocals therefore signals the contract subject to the approval of others whose relationships with the principals are affected. Relations between people change, reflecting individual changes in ambitions, goals, loyalities, affection, and so on. Change[s] in kin terms are negotiated by individuals striving to achieve the best fit between the kinds of obligations that inhere in particular kin reciprocals, personal relations, and aspirations. As a consequence, a grievance arises not as a breach of *kinship* but from a breach of a contract whose terms are specified by kin referents. (1987: 68-9)

The frameworks of matrilineal and patrilineal descent are both important for Tiwi. 'You follow your mother', said Tobias Arapi, 'in other ways you follow your father.' The role of matrilineal clans in marriage we have seen above. They have their own solidarity and also discipline their own members. From one's 'fathers' one is supposed to 'inherit' character traits, dreamings, and dances, among other things. Patrilineal descent is

particularly important in mortuary ritual, as mentioned before, because the spirits of the deceased 'follow' their 'fathers' and 'father's fathers'. Clever politicians who are skilled performers can launch 'identity claims' (Burke 1974) in ritual, for death provides an occasion on which the social fabric has to be restored (cf. Metcalf & Huntington 1991) and the emphasis on particular kinship ties and identities can be negotiated and expressed.

In the following section I give a historical background of the accomodation of Tiwi people to the outside world. As the recent past (and the fieldwork period as 'current history') will become clear in the remainder of this work, I will mainly deal with the 'opening up' of the Tiwi world.

2.4 Accomodation to the outside world

In 1636 and in 1705, the crews of ships of the Dutch East India Company explored the north coast of Melville Island and the west coast of Bathurst Island. The first expedition did not go ashore, but members of the second one had some interactions with the islanders. The islanders were given knives, linen and beads, among other things, and the sailors received crabs and fish in return. The Dutch discovered nothing that they considered valuable, such as metals, minerals or spices (Robert 1973; Swaardecroon & Chastelijn 1856).[25] Pilling states that until about 1800, the Portugese, based on Timor, raided Melville Island for slaves; however, the evidence for this is scanty (Hart & Pilling 1960: 97-8, see also Campbell 1834: 155-6). Since about the 1780s, a Southeast Asian *prau* fleet gathered annually at Macassar (the present Ujung Pandang in the south of the Indonesian island Sulawesi) before the *praus* set off to the north Australian coast, and its crews worked from Melville Island eastwards. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these people, known as Malays or Macassans, passed Melville Island when the monsoonal winds brought them to and from Australian waters (Cense 1950; MacKnight 1976: 181-2).[26] The Asian sailors came to collect prized varieties of sea-slug (trepang, sea cucumber or beche-de-mer) to be traded to the Chinese merchants at Macassar, and to a lesser extent also to get such things as pearls, tortoiseshell, and sandalwood (Cense 1950: 256). Long-lasting relationships were established with Aboriginal people on the coast of Arnhem Land (Warner 1958: 453-68; Berndt & Berndt 1988: 17-19). Searcy reports with regard to Melville Island that 'Apparently the Malays never succeeded in making friends with the natives on the island. That the Malays at some time had started to work on the north side of the island was evident, for remains of old fireplaces and smoke-houses have been found there' (1909: 46).[27]

A British expedition led by Flinders explored the Australian north coast and came across Melville and Bathurst islands in 1803 (Flinders 1814). About the same time, a French expedition under the command of Baudin, sent by

Napoleon Bonaparte, touched on the islands (Hart & Pilling 1960: 98; King 1827[1]: 122; Favenc 1888: 334). In 1818 another British expedition by King had to complete the surveying work of Flinders. King and his men established that Melville and Bathurst were two islands. They did not land on the islands, except in the north of the Apsley Strait; they were driven away from there by the islanders (King 1827[2]: 318-22).[28] The islands were named by the British after the viscount Melville, first lord of the admirality, and the earl Bathurst, principal secretary of state for the colonies (ibid. 1827[1]: 106, 117).

The British wanted to take possession of the Australian north before other colonial powers could do so, and planned to establish a military and trading settlement south of the Indonesian archipelago. They expected to be able to trade with the Macassans, who frequented the north Australian coast, in order to penetrate the Indonesian market and to introduce it to European commodities. On September 26, 1824, Fort Dundas, the first colonial settlement in north Australia, was founded on Melville Island. The population (some 120 people) consisted of marines and soldiers, forty-five convicts, and a few farmers. The settlement had to be abandoned within five years, as the expected trading ships did not turn up, and the inhabitants suffered from diseases and sneak attacks by the Tiwi. Nine of the white intruders were speared to death. One Tiwi man had been taken prisoner by the British to make him an interpreter, but he managed to escape (Campbell 1834). Tiwi people told me in great detail about the experiences of this prisoner, called Tampu, who had been locked up in a well. After his escape he went to a camp at Kulimbini, a waterhole. He told the people there about the white people (whom he called *moruwi*) at Fort Dundas (Pulumuntukulupa or Pupuliakwatatamugi). Together they crept up through the mangroves and attacked a white man who was washing clothes in the creek, pincushioning his body with barbed spears. The border of the British colony of New South Wales was shifted farther west to include Melville and Bathurst islands in 1825. In 1829 all the land of Australia was claimed for the British crown (Parry 1985: 1).

In the 1860s Tiwi were in possession of Macassan dugout canoes when they fought the Larrakia, both in the south of Melville Island and on the mainland. The main objective in the raids on both sides was to steal women (Pye 1985: 13-5). According to Roger, the spirit *jamparipari* then came from the jungle on Melville Island to retaliate against the wife-robbers. 'Larrakia' or 'Larrakian dog' nowadays is verbal abuse amongst Tiwi.

In 1863 the Northern Territory became a colony of the British colony of South Australia (Reid 1990; Parry 1985: 93). Palmerston (the present Darwin), the principal port in northern Australia, was founded in 1869. The main shipping route westward went along Cape Fourcroy, the southwest point of Bathurst Island (Searcy 1905: 47). Navigating around the islands was difficult, given the strong currents and many rocks and shoals. Time after time, ships wrecked on the islands' shores. The Tiwi obtained iron cutting tools from these ships (Hart & Pilling 1960: 98-9). Geologists sent

by the South Australian government briefly explored Melville Island for mineral resources in 1877 and in 1905 (Hingston 1938; Brown 1906; Gee 1907).[29] Among the white people in Palmerston the islanders had a reputation for hostility (see Foelsche 1882: 17; Sowden 1882: 21).[30]

From the 1890s onwards, European timber traders and buffalo hunters (Timorese buffalo were introduced by the British between 1824 and 1829) came to Melville Island. One buffalo hunter, Joe Cooper, became influential through his mainland Aboriginal employees. After an earlier failure he based himself at Paru, in the southwest of Melville Island, in 1905. He had a workforce of Aborigines from the Cobourg Peninsula to which young Tiwi men were added. The mainland Aborigines camped at Pawularitarra (called Tipalari by them) not far from Paru, where Cooper had erected a house. Cooper's Melville Island presence, backed up with guns, gave white men the opportunity to visit the island in safety, as Sir Baldwin Spencer noted (Mulvaney & Calaby 1985: 271). The anthropologists Klaatsch, Basedow, and Spencer all stayed for a short while at Paru as Cooper's guests. In 1910 another guest was a Roman Catholic priest from Darwin, who wanted to establish a mission on the islands. He would return the next year, when the new Federal Government took over the administration of the Northern Territory from South Australia.

Around the turn of the century the islanders became acquainted with the crewmen of Asian pearling luggers who worked near the islands, and they got on well (Pilling 1958: 17). The ships operated from Port Darwin of Palmerston, described as 'the Singapore of Australia' (Searcy 1905: 47) as most of the inhabitants were Asians. In the early 1900s Tiwi gained access to Darwin by working aboard ships, as labourers in town or as domestic servants for Europeans (cf. Hart 1930: 168). In 1905 Klaatsch visited Cooper on Melville Island. He came by Cooper's boat, the Buffalo, from Darwin, and of the Aboriginal crew of nine only the two Tiwi spoke some English (1907). Mabel told me that this boat wrecked in a storm near the northwest of Melville Island. The Aboriginal crew had to go court at Putjamirra. Mabel's husband Wonaeamirri (an old man when her brother married her to him as a little girl) acted as interpreter because he was the only one who could speak English. There was no conviction, for it was not considered their fault. White police officers went on patrols to the islands and began to enforce Anglo-Australian law. In Darwin, Tiwi saw and heard how white police treated Aborigines. Pilling reports that some Tiwi were arrested by the police and flogged. Other Aborigines went to jail and some were hung (1958: 91). White authorities deported Aboriginal offenders from Darwin to Cooper's camp on Melville Island. Guns came into use in raids to steal women, started by non-Tiwi Aborigines.

When the Catholic priest Gsell arrived on the southeast point of Bathurst Island to found a mission there, the beach was deserted, although people usually came to see if they could get tobacco. It turned out that raids with guns between people on Bathurst Island and Melville Island were in

progress. In his memoirs, the priest explains that 'The sight of one policeman's cap in those days would disperse a whole tribe' (Gsell 1956: 48). Sam Green, a white sawmiller who worked with Tiwi between 1909 and 1918 in the northeast of Melville Island, went to the federal government in Melbourne to complain about the violence against Tiwi people. The missionary at Bathurst Island Mission also lodged his protests. Hereupon, Cooper and the mainland Aborigines had to leave Melville Island in 1916. The island was leased to the Darwin-based meat firm Vesteys (Pye 1985: 15, 31-2).

Gsell, a priest of French origin, settled on Bathurst Island to pursue his programme to transform Tiwi society. He scorned 'the social system of the aborigines' which he considered 'an integral, absolute communism'. The Aborigines were equal and there was no private property: 'All are hunters; all are warriors; all are kings. None cultivate the land: therefore none is productive.' Gsell further writes that 'in this republic all power is in the hands of elders. They form the "party" in European communist parlance, and all outside the party - the women, the children, and the non-initiated - do not count' (1956: 32). According to him, this absolute communism had brought the Aborigines perpetual poverty: 'Indeed, there would seem to be only one hope for these people. Us! Contacts with civilization!' (ibid.: 34). In short, Gsell wanted to break the power of the 'party' of gerontocratic polygynists, to turn this foraging people into agriculturalists, and above all to make them Catholics, for in his view 'the true faith is the generating force of civilization' (ibid.: 38). To bring Tiwi people under his control, he wanted them to live at the mission. Therewith, his missionary interests and the interests of the Australian government went hand in hand.[31]

In 1920 Gsell began to buy (as he saw it) young Tiwi girls. One little girl had come to him to escape an arranged marriage with an older man. The missionary decided to present two pounds' worth of goods to the old men who had followed the girl, in order to set her free. These men accepted the goods, and the missionary was in business. In his heyday he 'bought' 124 Tiwi women. These women were raised in dormitories run by nuns and later were married off to young Tiwi men of about their own age. In this way, the Bathurst Island Mission undermined the polygyny and gerontocracy of former Tiwi society. The exchange of marriage partners between matrilineal clans, however, remained intact in these new marriages. Nancy, one of my key informants, told me that she was sold to the priest by her stepfather for tobacco, tea leaves, and flour when she was about eight years old. She stayed there at the convent and was educated by Catholic nuns until she was allowed to marry her husband Sam at an estimated age of sixteen in 1950 (Bathurst Island Mission parish registers). Nancy had been promised as a wife to an older man, but this man had died in the meantime. Sam, who used to work for the Air Force in Darwin, had two wives promised to him. Sam, from the Tiwi point of view, could marry Nancy because this marriage was a 'change 'em over' for a marriage of a woman of Sam's clan to a man of Nancy's clan in the previous generation. The

couple went to live in a bush camp on Melville Island, at the other side of the sea strait opposite the mission.

The mission further provided rations (including tobacco), medical treatment, and provisional housing. The Bathurst Island Mission flourished and the number of Tiwi attached to the mission increased with the years. The missionaries punished the local people who violated their rules; sometimes offenders were sent to Darwin and tried there (cf. Ritchie 1934; Pilling 1958; Priest 1986). The missionaries strongly disapproved of the 'pagan' Tiwi rituals. Some people became devout Catholics. Other Tiwi people nevertheless kept performing these rituals, out of view of the missionaries. Sometimes a priest disrupted a Tiwi ceremony; one man told me that he had nearly speared a certain priest in his anger. The postfuneral rituals for Tobias's father on Melville Island were also interfered with (cf. Fallon 1991). When the priest left in a dinghy with outboard motor on his way back to the mission across the strait, according to my informants, the motor exploded, and was never to be found again: Tobias and Simon had warned the priest. Simon had a dream about the spirit of Tobias' father, who told him that he had taken the motor.[32]

In the 1920s there was a large camp in the south of Melville Island. Tiwi there obtained goods from Japanese pearl divers in return for the sexual services of Tiwi women. This camp was broken up by white police. In the next decade the Japanese pearl divers moved to the north of the Apsley Strait near Garden Point (the present Pularumpi). Mission and government authorities resisted the Tiwi-Japanese relations, which they considered prostitution. In 1937, a government ration depot and annex police post was founded at Garden Point in order to control the situation. I was told that the two most senior men of that area, both sons of Tipaklipa, gave access to their country by putting up two crossed barbed spears each, whereafter white people ('scared') had to cut a string streched between the spears held by the two men. Next the two men took a ritual bath in the creek. They had lost a little part of their country. In line with the government policy of those days, patrol officers took children of mixed descent away from their mothers (cf. Cummings 1990); they also deported lepers to Channel Island in Darwin Harbour. Tiwi people still remembered how frightened they were of these policemen, who forcefully took people away from their midst. The children of mixed descent were brought to a so-called half-caste mission. Since 1940 there was such a mission at Garden Point (cf. Brogan 1990). During the Second World War, Tiwi people came in contact with military personnel. There were several naval bases in the Apsley Strait and another base at Cape Fourcroy in the southwest of Bathurst Island. Tiwi people worked for the Armed Forces and as guides aboard ships of the Australian navy (cf. Hall 1989). In 1940, the resident patrol officer shifted the government ration depot to the central north of Melville Island, where he founded a war settlement at Snake Bay. Later this government settlement would become an Aboriginal township called Milikapiti. After the war Tiwi people continued to work for the Australian

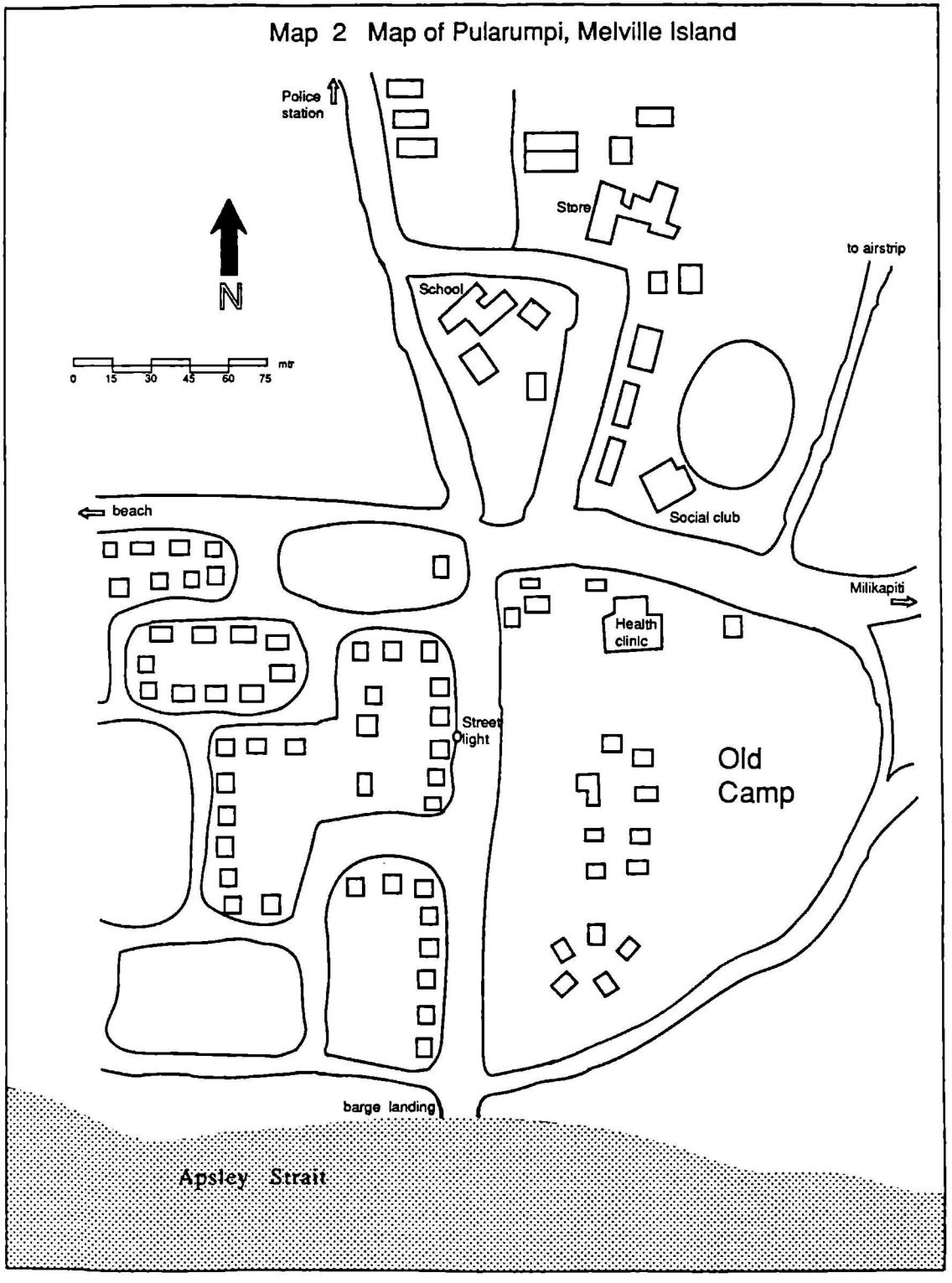
army at the army barracks in Darwin, living with their families at Bagot Native Reserve there.

Since the Second World War the majority of Tiwi people lived in the three settlements on the islands. Until the 1970s they were subjected to white superintendents, and the Tiwi rituals were still suppressed. From Brandl's thesis (1971) it appears that the influence of the Bathurst Island Mission was particularly strong and had an effect on the way mortuary rituals were performed, if these were performed at all.[33] In 1968, the 'half-caste mission' at Garden Point was abandoned; it would become an Aboriginal township as well. In the 1970s community advisors, replacing the superintendents, assisted the elected local councils. Later these councils obtained the right to make decisions on their own. In 1975, a police station was founded in Garden Point. Two police officers were stationed there, assisted by an Aboriginal police tracker and two Aboriginal police aides (in the two other townships). The police station contains an office, cells (where people can be locked up overnight), and a courtroom, where a Court of Summary Jurisdiction is held every fortnight. The Catholic mission on Bathurst Island has changed its policy and now supports Tiwi 'culture' - and wants to integrate it with Catholicism at the same time.

As noted above, the Tiwi live in Western-style townships; there is an small outstation at Paru and another one at Karlslake. I frequently heard Tiwi say a township like Nguiu (the former Bathurst Island Mission) on Bathurst Island, with a population of over 1200, was 'too big'. The population of Nguiu consists of far more clans (whose members surely have to support each other vis-a-vis those of other clans), and clans of greater numerical strength, than the population of Pularumpi (about 300 people). Tiwi considered Pularumpi a relatively 'quiet place'. The situation in Nguiu, where trouble easily snowballed, was seen as getting out of hand. At the end of 1991, Tiwi representatives to white administration developed plans to establish a new but smaller-scale township on Bathurst Island, for which they managed to get support from white authorities. In the 1970s not only was the Tiwi Land Council formed after Tiwi people formally regained their lands, but a cultural revival also took place. Nearly all Tiwi, including children, participate in the mortuary rituals, which they regard as extremely important in retaining their identity.

In the next chapter I present the life histories of two men, the later homicide victim and his father, that give a somewhat more personalised view of the changes that have taken place in Tiwi society in the twentieth century.

Map 2 Map of Pularumpi, Melville Island



3 THE VICTIM, SON OF MINAPINI

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will describe the life histories of Tobias Arapi and his father, Minapini. Tiwi sons 'follow' their fathers (and classificatory fathers in addition): they receive their personal names from them, their rights in their fathers' country, their dreamings, narrative and dreaming dances, and they are supposed to adopt their father's character traits (e.g., aggressiveness) and other features of his behaviour (e.g., way of walking, talking, and singing) and identity. Not all sons actually develop the same personality as their father (cf. Hart 1954) but it is a cultural expectation that they will. Tobias was seen as the same kind of person as his father, Minapini, who was said to have been a 'real murderman' (*kwampini*): aggressive, fearless, and reckless. In the beginning of the twentieth century he had shown that he was a killer par excellence when four prominent sneak attackers were killed in an ambush and a fifth one speared in the chest. My informants emphasised that Minapini could hardly wait to put his victims to death. The ambush in which Tobias' father played an outstanding role was one of the last major events before the era of sneak attacks (*kwampi*) ended. Shortly afterwards, guns, 'high-powered Schneiders and Martini-Henry's' (Pye 1985: 32), were introduced by mainland Aboriginal buffalo hunters in raids and counter-raids on the islands. White police patrolled, killings were outlawed, and offenders were taken to court. With the enforcement of Anglo-Australian law, the *Pax Australiana* on the islands, and spears being less effective than guns, the old-fashioned sneak attacks were no longer possible (albeit a few incidences occurred). In time, the story of the killings by Tobias' father attained some mythical dimensions. Hart recorded a fragment of the narrative in his fieldnotes in 1928, noting that Minapini was the first one who attacked, 'Milinbene [Minapini] first time, Milinbene first time, been chuck him [spear], catch old king Tookilly-ungilla [Mangatobi] alonga back' (1928/29). In 1954, both Goodale (1971: 177-9) and Pilling (1958: 226-9) recorded a version of the story. In their accounts Minapini is not mentioned, perhaps because he had died a few years before and his name was still taboo. In 1976, in the postfuneral rituals for a son of Mangatobi, the man who had escaped with a spear in his side, the ambush was re-enacted in a dance of a son's son of the victim. Tobias enacted the role of his father Minapini. He approached the central dancer from behind and put a spear beside the dancer's chest (David MacDougall, personal communication). The fact that Tobias had speared his own brother in the back (in 1971 or thereabouts) was for my informants evidence that he was like his father.

Minapini had been banned from his country, Tikelaru, and therefore his son Tobias was not allowed to return to his country either. Father and son expressed their sorrow and their longing for their land in songs. It is thus necessary to know more about Minapini and the ambush to understand how Tobias was seen by his consociates decades later. In September and October 1988, the story about the ambush was told frequently in Pularumpi, with a strong emphasis on Tobias' father's role.

At that time, some people had grievances and old grudges against Tobias. Hart notes that an accuser 'went into minute detail, not only about the actual offence, but the whole life career of the defendant' (Hart & Pilling 1960: 81). The connected life histories of Tobias and his father can help us to understand the grievances and old grudges. The personal biographies of these two Tiwi people give a historical dimension to the case, covering how the changes that took place in Tiwi society affected the lives of two (male) individuals in the twentieth century. These life histories further provide information about the victim's social background and the conflicts he was involved in before the killing. After the homicide, knowledge about the victim's social background, about who was on bad terms with him, and about his life history was relevant for Aboriginal people trying to discern the motivation for the killing and the identity of the possible killer or killers (cf. Reid 1983: 112). This knowledge could also provide justifications. Minapini's life can be contrasted with the life of his son as the circumstances under which they lived changed over time.

3.2 The victim's life history

Tobias had been born in the country Malau, in the north of Bathurst Island, in about 1927. His father had moved to this country from his country of origin in the southwest of the island, Tikelaru, to acquire his wives. Tobias spent his childhood at the Bathurst Island Mission (Nguiu), where he also received some education. About 1938, his father decided to go back to Tikelaru, but when he and a group of people, including his family, arrived there by boat they were expelled from this country. Then Minapini went with his wives and children to Garden Point on Melville Island. Minapini worked for the government depot, which was founded in 1937; he helped clear the area of trees. Minapini continued to be employed at Garden Point when the place was taken over by the Roman Catholic Mission as a site to raise children of mixed descent from the islands and elsewhere. During the Second World War, Minapini made barbed spears for members of the Armed Forces stationed at several bases around the Apsley Strait in exchange for food and tobacco. In these years, Tobias' slightly older brother Jacob, with their father's consent, was captured for initiation.[34] I was told that when he returned from the bush he had two infected scars running over his chest. The application of these cicatrices (called *minga*) by the (prospective) brother-in-law who had seized the initiate, and vice versa,

denoted an agreement between the two men that they could marry each other's sisters. Jacob later obtained an old widow, Fanny Groves, with a son by a previous marriage, of his father's clan.

Unlike Jacob, Tobias was one of the many young Tiwi men who received an adolescent wife from the Bathurst Island Mission. In 1948, he married his eighteen-year-old bride Gloria Pintawuni in church. Nevertheless, this union complied with the Tiwi preferential rule of marriage. It was part of the exchange of partners between the clan of Tobias' mother (*pungaluwila*) and the clan of his father (*wulintuwila*). The couple stayed at the Mission in the Aboriginal living quarters of Myilly Point by the Apsley Strait. Their first child, Janice, was born thirteen months after the church wedding. Gloria gave birth to two more daughters, Laura and Claire.

In March 1952, when the youngest baby was only a few days old, a tragic incident occurred. The eldest girl, Janice, nearly three years of age, disappeared. She had apparently followed her grandmother, who had left the camp to collect firewood. Tobias swam across the crocodile-infested sea strait but did not succeed in finding her. When the tide came in, someone saw her body floating in the strait. The little corpse was taken out of the water. 'She died in water', Tobias told me, 'but I think she been drowned.' One woman gave me an account in great detail of how she had been strangled by a certain man and how her dead body had been retrieved. Stressing that the little girl had been put to death, she further stated, 'but she wasn't full! Full of water, nothing! She been dead long time.' Tobias was grief-stricken. He covered his face and body with excrement, or as Laura expressed it, 'he painted himself with shit (*kineri*).' When little children are no longer breast-fed they, in their tantrums, throw dirt at their parents. This use of dirt as a symbol of parent-child separation is a convention of Tiwi mortuary behaviour. Tobias employed faeces as an expression of his deep grief and because it was a dreaming of his grandfather (FF, *amini*). Tiwi say they 'follow' their father's and father's father, and so in Tiwi eschatology do the spirits of the dead. After death a senior influential person with a large number of offspring usually becomes the focal point of identification for his actual and classificatory descendants in the second descending generation, henceforth called a one-'grandfather'-group (*aminiyarti*, addressed as *aminiatuwi*). Thus Tobias emphasised his partilineal identity as his and his daughter's spiritual track, so to speak.

Following this traumatic experience, Tobias and Gloria had to face another loss. The new baby fell ill and died, two days after her little sister. 'Last one daughter', Tobias said, 'she died. My wife was crook. Later I was thinking I was too young, didn't care about babies.' His words draw attention to the fact that the role of a young Tiwi father first came into existence during the mission period and was without precedent in pre-mission Tiwi society (or even before the first church wedding in 1929). In retrospect, Tobias seems to have seen himself unprepared for that role. Gloria, for whom the death of her firstborn child no doubt was also a hard

blow, had to observe a number of taboos, both because she had just given birth to a child and because she had lost another. According to some elderly Tiwi women, the death of the baby had to be attributed to the violation of a taboo. Mothers with newborns (as well as menstruating and pregnant women) are not allowed to go near water, salt water being even worse, because in that event the spiritual Rainbow Snake (*amputji*) will cause sickness. Gloria had gone too close to the Apsley Strait, and therefore her baby had contracted influenza. It must be noted, however, that although child mortality rapidly decreased in the 1950s and early 1960s as a result of hospital births and other medical care provided at the local mission, quite a number of babies and small children still died of diseases and bacterial infections (e.g., diarrhoea, influenza, and mengitis). The Bathurst Island Mission had become overcrowded; people were living in close quarters and sanitary conditions were poor.

Around 1950, Minapini also died. According to Tobias, his father was between 70 and 80 years old then. He was buried on Melville Island across the Apsley Strait, opposite the Bathurst Island Mission. In 1951, Tobias began to play Australian Rules football in Darwin. For seven years he played for Wanderers, one of the Darwinite clubs with Aboriginal players. During the course of his life he performed all kind of jobs. Tobias went to work for the Air Force in Darwin in 1953, and continued there for four years. Thereafter, he was employed as a diver on a Japanese pearl lugger (in 1953, for the first time since the war, the Japanese began to work again in Australian waters). Nine months later, he returned to the Bathurst Island Mission but soon shifted to the so-called half-caste mission at Garden Point. His brother Jacob used to work there as a sawmiller. In July 1959, Gloria died suddenly. She was buried in the local Catholic graveyard.

Relatives took care of their daughter Laura while Tobias moved to the forestry station at Pickataramoor. He worked there until he met a woman of about his own age at Snake Bay. In December 1966, he married this woman, Kate Maruwaka, a widow with three daughters from two previous marriages. Unlike his first wife of the Mosquito clan (*wulintuwila*), Tobias' new wife belonged to the Pandanus clan (*miartuwi*). This meant he somehow had to arrange for his own clan, the Stone clan (*pungaluwila*), to return a woman to the Pandanus clan. With Kate and her daughters, Tobias lived at Nguiu, thereafter at Paru and Pawularitarra, and then again at Garden Point.

In 1968, the Catholic mission sold its land and nearly all its property at Garden Point to the Australian government. It was decided that Garden Point would become a Tiwi township. Tobias then worked with the local housing association, and further had jobs gardening and collecting garbage. Jacob stayed with his wife Fanny, nearly thirty years his senior, at Garden Point as well. In 1971 or thereabouts, after heavy drinking, the two brothers came into conflict. It happened under a mango tree in the back of the Old Camp (that is, in the middle of Sam's camp at the time of my fieldwork; see section 1.2). Tobias got a barbed spear and thrust it into his brother's back.

One man remembered that the spear broke off, leaving its point in Jacob's spine; he drove the injured brother to Snake Bay, and from there Jacob was flown to Darwin Hospital. Tobias scolded himself. He told me that they both were drunk. Jacob had had a bottle of liquor, 'hot stuff from town'. I was told by another man that Jacob had been 'going round' (had an affair) with his brother's wife. From the moment the point of the spear was removed from Jacob's back, he was paralysed and confined to a wheelchair. Yearly around Christmastime he was flown in from Darwin to visit his friends and relatives.

In the 1970s, the Native Affairs Branch brought a group of Tiwi people who were living in a bush camp in the southwest of the island (Pawularitarra) to Garden Point to increase the indigenous population of the new township, laid out in Western style. In April 1975, in line with the new developments, a police station was opened at Garden Point to police both islands. Kate by then had given birth to three daughters and a son; Heather, Ralph, Shirley and Evelyn. At the end of May 1976, Jacob died in Darwin Hospital, and was buried at a new graveyard near the remains of Fort Dundas, in Garden Point.

Three months later, Tobias' life took another dramatic turn. During the school holidays at the end of August, Tobias with his family and others were camping in the open air near a waterhole called Kulimbini, about 10 km out of Garden Point. At about midnight, Kate and her fourteen-year-old daughter Judy went down to the waterhole to get water for the morning. The men were playing cards some 200 metres from the water. When coming back, Kate was bitten on her ankle by a snake. Judy gave the following account to the police:

> Then I saw a lot of blood coming out of her leg, I then went to have a look with the torch and I see the snake hiding behind a small tree, than I started shouting for daddy, and the men just left the cards game and run over, daddy then got the snake by the head it was still alive and trying to bite daddy but it couldn't, then daddy left the snake on the road and got axe and cut it to pieces. Mummy she couldn't feel the pain because she was drunk (...). We tried to help her, but she said "Leave me alone I'm alright", then about 15 minutes later she start to feel pain (Police Station Files, Pularumpi, Melville Island).

Judy went into the night to Garden Point to get help from the sister of the local health clinic, but help arrived too late. Tobias put the snake, a death adder (*pwamika*), in an esky (Australian-English for a cool box). He inspected the little marks on his wife's leg; she no longer felt pain. Tobias told the police: 'I said don't tell me no lie, she say "No I'm alright, I go to sleep now", (...) I keep on checking her, and I check her around two or three o'clock, she was cold, she passed away, then I start crying' (ibid.). As usual after a Tiwi death, the body was shifted and covered with a blanket. In the afternoon Kate was buried in the local graveyard; the esky with the poisonous snake was placed on top of the grave mound.

Bruce Kerimerini, a classificatory brother of Tobias (FMSS) who camped with him at the waterhole, alluded to a connection between the death

of Tobias' brother and the death of his second wife. He stressed that Jacob's dreaming was the poisonous snake, *'taringini*, cheeky one'. A few other people who told me the story had not been there at the time. One man said that both Tobias and Kate had been drunk, and therefore they had not taken care to make a fire, which would keep snakes away. In this version of what happened, Tobias and his wife did not notice the death adder when they spread out a blanket to lay down on, whereafter the woman had been bitten. Such an account, implying in Tiwi perceptions a serious accusation of neglect (a punishable offence), fit in with the animosity between Tobias and several other people around the time of his death. Tobias often mentioned that Kate had died of a snake bite at the waterhole, leaving him behind with their small children, the youngest daughter Evelyn only eighteen months old. At times when he told of these events he was overcome with grief, as his third and last wife Marylou had died an untimely death a few months before we became acquainted in September 1988. One of Tobias' sisters took care of the baby and children. 'She died last five years ago', Tobias said, 'All my brothers and sisters all died on the islands. I am only by myself, three wives died, only by myself.'

Tobias regretted he had speared his elder brother Jacob. When he told me about this tragic event in his life he performed a song in a mournful voice: (Jacob saying) 'Why you been hit me youngest brother?/You and me, fight!/You [and] I growing up together./Fight!' Following Jacob's death this song had been composed by Jacky Moantu, a father's sister's son of the two brothers, for the seasonal yam ritual at Garden Point in 1977. Having been grown up together for Tiwi people implies feelings of great affection. Furthermore, given the ideology of fraternal generosity, brothers who share one or two parents or even a grandparent ought not to fight with each other. Tobias was well aware he had committed a serious wrong. It might be inferred from Jacky's song that by spearing his brother, a violent act that had resulted in Jacob's death, Tobias had lost the support of his clan: Jacky was a senior man of Jacob's and Tobias' clan and the custodian of a sacred site in their country. Jacky happened to be in the position to give permission on behalf of his clan for Tobias to be punished. Such a punishment, the taking of beatings with a club (a 'good hiding'), would have to be meted out by clan members, preferably classificatory brothers.The song text indicates Tobias was blamed indeed. Whether Tobias had been actually punished I was unable to find out. It seems unlikely for the grievance was still aired and appeared to be unsettled in 1988. As far as the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system is concerned, some people said Tobias had been in jail for having inflicted grieveous harm to Jacob but others denied it. Tobias never mentioned to me he had been in goal.[35]

Widowed twice and bereaved of his only actual brother, Tobias stayed in Garden Point, where he got the job of police tracker. Stories went around that when he was drunk and had arguments with other people he used to put on his uniform. Once, I was told, Tobias had a sharp exchange of words with a few women. He asserted that they couldn't touch him because he was

a policeman. Thereupon he went away and came back in his complete uniform, hat and all. One of the women took his hat, threw it on the ground, and stamped on it. People who had known him for years told me that 'He was a good bloke when he was sober, but when he was drunk he was a mongrel.' Another anecdote dating from these years was that Tobias owned a yellow motorbike that made a terrible noise. He rode around on it in the Old Camp the whole night, disturbing everyone's peace. Although Tobias usually was a very charming man, I witnessed how he at times could be enervating when he was intoxicated. He was often compared with his late father, who also had a reputation for being aggressive.

At Paru, Tobias told me, he fell in love again with another woman named Marylou Kilimirika. She was a childless widow who had left her first husband Fred. Then Marylou joined her sister Dorothy as a co-wife. Both sisters were married to Sebastian. The latter died, and the two sisters became widow. Marylou's third husband, Tobias, married her in church on Boxing Day, 1987. Tobias kept two photographs, one portraying the new married couple and the other portraying bride and groom with his family in front of the Catholic church, an old army shed dating from the Second World War in Garden Point. Tobias and Marylou lived in the Old Camp. With the start of the dry season they went to work at Putjamirra Safari Camp, about 20 km north of the township. They demonstrated their hunting skills to small groups of wealthy tourists from all over the world. On a Sunday morning in early June they were to go to the tourist camp but had trouble in finding transport.

Tobias borrowed Simon's 4WD car. The previous night, men with permits had been able to take away a lot of beer from the Social Club. As a result of this many people, including the couple, had been drinking throughout the night. Tobias and Marylou had to find someone not too drunk to drive the car. Finally, a neighbour in the Old Camp agreed, although he had little experience in driving on dirt roads and was inebriated as well. They went on their way, Tobias next to the driver and Marylou in the rear of the car. Most of the way, Kevin Wangiti, the driver, drove at considerable speed; Tobias said the speedometer indicated 100 km per hour. Then they came to a bend in the road and when they got around that bend, the two men saw a patch of loose sand. Afterwards Tobias told the police, 'I think he panicked. Something went wrong in his brain, because he just went off the road (...) I was yelling at Kevin to slow down and stop. The next thing was we hit a big rock and the car went over' (Police Station Files, ibid.). Marylou was thrown out of the back and then crushed and trapped under the side of the car. Except for an injury to Tobias' back, both men escaped unharmed. They went to see what had happened to the woman. 'He was looking for his wife but he only found a head', said one of her clan sisters when relating the accident to me. Kevin and Tobias were unable to lift the car off the body. Another woman (who happened to be in the mangroves looking for crabs nearby) told me that Tobias chased Kevin around the car with a pocketknife. Marylou was dead.

Initially, Tobias seemed to have given his anger towards Kevin free reign. The white management of the tourist camp, a husband-and-wife team, told me that Tobias had been angry at Kevin in his grief but that they had talked it out of his head. He acknowledged, so they said, that he had been drunk himself too. In our conversations Tobias never uttered any resentment in relation to Kevin. He just pointed him out as the driver of the car and said this man would have to go to court for it in due time. Four months after the accident he had expected the court case would have taken place. He did not know when it would be, he said, but it had to be soon. Kevin, who lived in the house next door to Tobias, had written the date of September the 11th to go to court on the wall of his hut. For reasons neither known to me nor to Kevin, it had been postponed. Marylou was buried next to Kate in the local graveyard. Kevin did not attend the funeral, according to Simon, because he felt ashamed (*aliranga*).

Despite the relatively small number of cars, this type of fatal motor vehicle accident occurred frequently on the islands at the end of the 1980s.[36] After such an accident the location where it had happened becomes taboo (*pukamani*) and the road is blocked off. A special ceremony (*ampuraprapunga* or *purumatrapangari*) is held to 'open up' the road again. Someone selected as a ritual worker (*ambaru*) makes a mortuary pole. The spot is ritually cleansed with smoke and a few dances are performed relating to the dreaming of the deceased, accompanied by a song series about the cause of death. The mortuary pole is erected at the place where the victim died, and the close relatives of the deceased cry and wail at the pole. At the end of this small ceremony for Marylou, Tobias placed the bucket she used in foraging activities upside down on the pole.

When such a sudden and violent death happened, people remained near the surviving spouse. A female friend stayed with a young widow whose husband had died in a car crash, she explained, because 'she might do something to herself'. Tobias' eldest daughter Laura came from Darwin to live in the Old Camp in order to keep an eye on him. Several times Tobias expressed deep grief when showing me his marriage certificate and wedding photos. Tobias planned to cover the graves of his deceased wives with a concrete slab before he would leave Garden Point at the start of the wet season. He took my wife and I to the grave of his first wife Gloria in the 'old cemetery' which had become encapsulated in the township. Tobias rapidly weeded the grave mound, as Tiwi used to do when visiting graves of relatives. The graves of his two other wives, in the graveyard near Fort Dundas, he wanted to show us another time. Tobias told us that he did not want to marry again because he had lost three wives. It had been 'too much' for him, he said; he wanted to 'keep the bad luck away'.

Before this account of Tobias' life comes to a close, I have to turn to the life history of his father as told at the end of the 1980s. We need to know a number of perceived features of Minapini's actions and behaviour to understand how his son was characterised by his fellows. Minapini's

reputation for fighting prowess was based in particular on the fourfold killing for which he was held responsible. People expressed to me that Tobias had inherited his father's character traits of aggressiveness and fearlessness. I was warned by people who had come into conflict with Tobias not to trust him; they referred to his father in trying to persuade me that Tobias was mischievous.

In my presentation of the last phase of the life history of Minapini's son, I shift focus from the social drama of the killings at Matalau to the social drama in the current history of my fieldwork period. The events described in the final section represent the first two phases of a social drama arising in a conflict situation as outlined by Turner (1974: 37-42), namely 'breach' and 'crisis'. Tobias violated the rules in relation to the exchange of marriage partners, a 'breach of regular, norm-governed social relations' (ibid.: 38). The conflict escalated, 'the phase of mounting crisis' (ibid.), when the later victim persisted in his illicit affair and neither paid compensation nor moved to somewhere else. The other two phases of the social drama, redress and reintegration, which according to Turner can be recognised retrospectively, will be described in the following chapters.

3.3 The killings at Matalau

The following account is a composite of the various versions of the story of the killings at Matalau as told before and after Tobias' death by people in his intimate social networks.[37] In the days preceding his violent death it was told to me time after time with the utmost vigour concerning Minapini's actions. The raconteurs were almost all descendants of the major *dramatis personæ*. They were not disinterested narrators, for they mostly identified closely with their respective ancestors, whose interrelatedness became hypothetical for the current situation. The social drama here represents cyclical repetitive social processes that also bear significance for the tellers' living action (Turner 1974). In other words, their views on selected events from the past also tell a story about the social drama in current history.

The story was very popular on the islands and formed, as we will see, the subject matter of songs and dances. Allusions, such as a single word or a minimal dance movement, sufficed not only to bring up a story well-known to the audience, but also to recontextualise it, and by the selection of a particular emphasis marked the position taken by the performer in a current issue if not already following from that person's background.

The Tiwi sneak attackers (*kwampi*) were studied by Pilling from the pre-mission time (the Bathurst Island Mission was founded in 1911) from the reminiscences of elderly people in 1954 (1958, 1978). Among the data Pilling collected for this period were nineteen cases in which sneak attackers were involved. The number of deaths at the hands of *kwampi* amounted to 54, and he recorded 19 injuries in addition (1958: 138, 1988: 93).

The *kwampi* used techniques of deception; they attacked to kill or injure in the night, just before dawn, or during the day when they pretended to come as friends (Pilling 1988: 94). The weapon used almost exclusively by the sneak attackers was the spear, especially a heavy multi-barbed spear (the one-sided *tunkwaliti*, and the two-sided *arawuningkiri*).

The actions of *kwampi* had to do with competition over women or were retaliation for grievous bodily harm or death (which in turn were usually a result of 'woman-related' trouble). According to Pilling, 'The ideal pattern for *kwampi* was for the brother of the man unjustly murdered to sneak up and kill his murderer. (...) He cut the veins in his shin [indicating he was bereaved of a maternal brother - ev] and painted his *arawunakari* with blood so that it would find the murderer quickly' (1958: 140). After a killing, sneak attackers painted their bodies with white clay (cf. Goodale 1971: 178) and pulled out their beards, which are both signs of mourning. Signs of aggression by sneak attackers and fighters alike were spitting, putting their beards and goose-feather balls in their mouths, and yelling particular calls (e.g., the sound of a shark chasing its prey). My informants were adamant that there had been no female sneak attackers. *Kwampi* figure prominently in the story about the fight at Matalau below.

Sometime in the nineteenth century, Portamini, the 'big man' in the country Rangku, sent two younger brothers away to Melville Island. There they settled in the area around Snake Bay, which at that time was vacant or thinly populated.[38] One of the brothers was Milewuri. He founded a new country, called Wulurangku, on the western side of the bay; his brother somewhat later founded a country on the eastern side (cf. Goodale 1971: 179). In time Milewuri became a 'big man' with many wives and offspring.

His sons were able fighters. In the early 1890s, according to Pilling, Milewuri and his sons were involved in a series of sneak-attack raids and counter-raids in which eight people were killed (1958: 312-7). A decade later, in 1905 or thereabouts, the sons figured in another series of these attacks. Five of them had set out to avenge the death of a brother. They went to the country of the killer, where they encountered a group of travellers. A crippled man, named Piyimpiwi, had trouble keeping up with these people. Milewuri's son Pimparamparungi, who had proven himself to be a reckless killer, wanted to put this man to death (cf. ibid.: 326-7). Piyimpiwi's right leg had been destroyed when he had climbed a tree and cut the upper part, which fell down on him. He was a tall 'blind man, cripple with walking stick ... didn't know people want him with spear.' Pimyimpiwi's 'blindness' might be interpreted as figurative speech: He was not able to see his enemies. There at Julupi (in the northeast of Melville Island), Milewuri's sons discussed what they would do with him. It was getting dark. The old man came closer. Pimparamprungi said, 'Hey, see that man we got to hit him! We got to spear him properly.' Mangatobi, another one of the sons, objected to his brother's proposal. 'Hey, we don't do that, that's our friend

(*mantani*)!', he replied, 'We can't do that, we don't wonna be cruel, cruel down old man.'

'Ah, it's alright', said Pimparamprungi, 'it's alright, we only spear him goal, from here to that ... long way, you know, we throw spear. We don't go close, only spear.'

'What you can do that', Mangatobi reckoned, 'I don't wanna do that.' Let us put a halt to this, he continued, 'that's our friend. We leave him! Our father will be angry with us.'

Pimparamprungi now responded, 'No, we don't spear, don't kill him. We chuck him from here to there.'

Mangatobi recognised the man's identity and their relatedness. Piyimpiwi was one of their 'friends' or 'relations' (*aramipi*); that is, a man of a closely related mutually exogamous clan. Members of both clans supported each other in the accomplishment of marriage deals and in fights. Besides, the old man was their father's *mawanyini*, mother's brother's son. The relationship with one's *mawanyini* (or *mawana* for females) in Tiwi society is one of the utmost affection, mutual support, and generosity. If Milewuri's sons injured or killed the old man they would seriously violate the established rules. This man was simply too closely related. Myers reports of the Pintubi of the Western Desert that many revenge expeditions turned back after the attackers realised their shared identity with the intended victim and became 'sorry' for him and gave up their plans (1986a: 118). In contrast to Mangatobi, Pimparamparungi in his aggressiveness and recklessness, and perhaps his anger in seeking revenge for his brother, denied his shared identity with the old man. He went ahead and threw his heavy multi-barbed spear. The injured man tried to run; he looked around and asked who the attackers were. Milewuri's sons told him:

'Oh, you know me?', Piyimpiwi asked.

'Yeah, we know you ... we thought another man, we didn't know', the attackers responded.

'Oh, come on, don't tell lies, no doubt', said the old man.

The brothers pretended they had not recognised Piyimpiwi and had mistaken him for another man. Nancy, Milewuri's son's daughter, asserted they were even members of one clan. This was a significant assertion when she told the story in relation to Tobias. As we have seen, Tobias had speared his own brother. They not only had a father in common but also shared one mother. Therefore, Tobias and his brother were members of the same clan. Killing one's own brother is considered an abhorrant wrong; it appears to be such an extremely rare event that it is unheard of in 'traditional' Aboriginal societies (cf. Rose 1987: 35). Although in the present case the antagonists were related more distantly, their being clan members posed the problem of who had to retaliate for the old man's death since the killers belonged to the same group.

Milewuri's sons took the man from where he had fallen and carried him up to a higher place because the tide was coming in. They made a fire for him, but Piyimpiwi died. The brothers went through the smoke by way

of ritual cleansing. They wailed and pulled out their beards, a sign of grief. Piyimpiwi's young wife (some said an 'old lady') had followed him. She had seen what had happened to her husband, and said: 'Oh, you mob you gotta watch out, cause that your father find. They gotta do something to you mob when they hear that news, you know, your old man [Milewuri], gotta be trouble.' The woman went to the group of travellers between three and four miles ahead of them. She related to these people what she had witnessed: 'My husband there, getting kill [in the sense of being hit or injured].' After revealing the identity of the killers, she reckoned, 'They been kill him. But he still [is a]live, must be dead now.' From there they all went to where Piyimpiwi was.

The brothers had run away in the direction of their home camp in the Snake Bay area. That night they camped halfway at a waterhole called Teracumbi. The following morning they walked further to their father's camp where they arrived at the beach (named Pantjo). People who saw them asked one another: 'Look, hey, what happened this mob? They have no whiskers [beards] there. They pulled them out, something wrong!' Thereupon their father Milewuri questioned them:

'Oh, I know you mob, you killed somebody. You tell me truth, which one man?', he asked.

'Yeah, we tell you truth', his sons agreed.

'Then what name?', Milewuri went on.

'Blind man, we couldn't know. It was dark', they lied.

'Who that man?', their father persisted.

'You know that blind man, Piyimpiwi', the sons confessed.

'Oh, you shouldn't do that! You should let him go. Where he now?', said Milewuri.

'He is dead. We didn't know him. We thought somebody', they told the lie again.

Milewuri decided to punish his sons. He told their wives to sit with him and not to sleep with them because they had put his *mawanyini* to death. He thus enforced them to abide a mourning taboo for they could not have sexual intercourse. In addition, he ordered the women to throw their food away so his sons had nothing to eat: 'All right, let them sleep. Hungry ... for they didn't find any tucker.' (I was told people were always very hungry when they had killed someone.) The next morning they had to paint their bodies with white clay. One of the raconteurs commented: 'When they murder, they got paint white. And they know murderpeople... If they murdered somewhere from Tumalumpi, or Tikelaru, or Rangku, like that, painted white, they know straight away.' Milewuri's final and secret verdict was capital punishment: 'You mob gotta be finished!'

He might have had two other reasons to get rid of these men. This 'big man' headed a very large encampment and was responsible for its people, and his five sons kept giving him trouble. In response to their frequent raids in other countries, counter-raids could be expected. Then people lived in constant fear; they hid in the mosquito-infested mangroves, unable to light

fires without revealing their presence (cf. Pilling 1968a: 158). Two women (Milewuri's DD and SD) said the brothers did 'humbug' (were amorous suitors of) their father's younger wives. The relationship between father and sons surely was considered too close for Milewuri to challenge his sons in the conventional spear-throwing duel (see Hart & Pilling 1960: 80-3).

Milewuri sent a message to his 'brothers' of his quasi-semi-moiety (*takaringuwi*, the Mullet people, a cluster of four closely related clans including Milewuri's own clan) in other countries. To authorise the message he made a 'letterstick' (*poruntiki*), a carved small piece of wood, that would be carried by a messenger. Only an actual widow (*ambaru*) or someone in this category of people (*ambaruwi*, either sex) could deliver the message, 'take licence to thing'. The person acting as messenger, of course, had relatives in the receiving camp. Sometimes, in case this person was a widow indeed, the one to whom she brought the message could marry her. The practice of using 'lettersticks' had been adopted from mainland Aborigines, probably from the employees of the buffalo-shooter Joe Cooper who had come to Melville Island in this era. With five v-shaped cuttings in his 'letterstick' Milewuri indicated his sons (whose dreaming was the crocodile, hence the pattern of the cuttings was derived from the shape of this animal's tail) had to be killed. He had set out an appropiate time for it to happen. After his death, when the dance ceremonies in the postfuneral rituals for him started, his sons had to be 'finished off'. He did not want them to dance for him. This message went to his 'brothers' Kantilla in the country Malau, Portamini in Rangku, Kalawuri in Murnupwi, and to Minapini in Tikelaru. Kantilla kept the 'letterstick' in his possession; he would lead the expedition.

Milewuri died after some time. Pimparamprungi and a few of his brothers went to Rangku to inform their relatives in this country of Milewuri's death and the planned final rituals for their deceased father. A special type of song, 'when somebody arrives after long time' (*umpaturunumtunkkuruwatuwala*), was performed by Pimparamparungi. In the metaphorical song language it told about his father's death. An old man from Snake Bay, who had turned it into a song of his own for a seasonal yam ritual (*kulama*), sang it for me:

> Nanunga (the swordfish) was watching him.
> She tried to watch him [the crocodile, that is, the deceased]:
> 'Why from the place where he lay down [Milewuri's grave at the beach] the
> water is splashing [the crocodile had dived down into the water,
> meaning Milewuri had died]?

After Pimparamparungi's visit to Rangku, his deceased father's 'brothers' held a meeting. They agreed to each make a number of barbed spears of the type used in man-killing (*arawuningkiri*). When they made themselves up to go to Wulurangku for the final ceremony, the people of the countries on Bathurst Island would meet at a place called Tuwtu. A man who had worked for the army during the Second World War indicated how the roles were distributed between the sneak attackers: "'I'm in charge", said Kantilla, "I'm

general. Minapini, captain of war. Portamini, capman." He didn't have spears, only Minapini!'

The Bathurst Island people (from Rangku, Malau, and Tikelaru) paddled across the Apsley Strait in dugout and bark canoes. They landed at the Garden Point beach; from there they went inland to Kulimbini waterhole, walking further along a track to Mungaru (south of Shark Bay). After passing through this area, the attackers crossed Murikaujanga Creek to Matalau. One informant stated that these Mullet people had come close to the sacred seat of Minapini's clan (Wulintu or Nodlaw Island in Shark Bay). All mullet fish (*takaringa*), their united clan emblem, jumped over the sea: 'Ooh, maybe today we got to hit those men!' The men were painted with ochres and carried spears when they arrived in Matalau. The people at Matalau heard them coming and were telling one another: 'Oh, look that mob, that's from Rangku and Tikelaru. Oh, yeah, they come in for corroboree, that old man. Yes, yes.'

At night, Kantilla directly organised the first of a series of dance ceremonies leading up, in space and time, to the grand mortuary final ritual (*iloti*) for Milewuri. The bereaved sons had to dance in these small rituals but were a bit reluctant because they did not want Kantilla and Minapini, reputed sneak attackers from countries they had raided, to 'square' with their father in the final rituals. The mortuary poles to be erected at Milewuri's grave had been made, however, so things could progress. Kantilla selected male teenagers who he thought were ready for the initiation. These young men (*ilanighuwi*, single *ilanighi*), including young actual and classificatory sons of the deceased, had to perform in the dance ceremony (hence called *ilanigha*) as well. (It might be noted that the initiation of young males here coincides with the initiation of the spirit of the deceased into the world of the dead.) Furthermore, 'anyone' was free to dance in this mortuary ritual. The rituals were directed towards the dead man's dreaming place and the sacred seat of his clan, Wulintu. The dances and accompanying songs had the dreaming of the dead man, the crocodile, as their main theme. The famous crocodile dance depicted the spearing of the mythological crocodile man Irekopei by Tiwi sneak attackers. In the cleared ceremonial ground Kantilla performed the songs for the *ilanigha*:

> Plemarepe (name of a crocodile) dives into the water.
> We see that splashing water and look into the water
> where we see all bubbles underneath [the crocodile was on the bottom].

In other words, he sang that Milewuri had died and his spirit would have to follow his paternal ancestors (of the crocodile dreaming). Kantilla composed a second song for Milewuri's bereaved children (or*mamurapi*). He gave them a clue as to what their classificatory fathers were up to with them. The second line refers to the accompanying dance (called *ampikatoa* or*kutungura*), an extremely energetic dance in which the performer with his body in a straight line moves forward in the ceremonial ring fiercely

throwing up dirt from under his feet. As mentioned before, this is an allusion to the tantrums of a little child to symbolise the separation between the bereaved children and their deceased father, as well as the anger of the former felt at his death. (It seems even more appropriate here because the sons had stood up against their father.) Kantilla sang:

> All these crocodiles [Milewuri's sons] sink down
> and going round they make the water sloshy.
> These crocodiles are holding ground and looking up;
> People on the shore grab them by their tails
> [Tiwi used to fight crocodiles with their bare hands].

One of the men who performed these songs for me commented: 'And that mob couldn't understand what that mean. That meaning, you know, that trouble. They wouldn't know. They should know quickly, pick it up that word, you know, but can't do it.' Milewuri's sons failed to grasp the hidden meaning of the song text. Korupu, a brother-in-law of these men, appeared to have understood. He tried to warn them with a physical sign. A grandson of Korupu, whose father had passed the story to him, recounted while mimicking their voices how they failed to grasp this warning too:
'Hey, that old man', Mangatobi said to his brother, 'Korupu been scratch me hard.'
'What for?'
'I don't know, must be something wrong.'
'Oh, is nothing this mob', his brother Pimparamparungi replied, 'this mob nothing. We start here. You must not worry about that, this nothing, he scratched you.'
'No, look! He been scratch me here three times...got blood running here [left upperarm]', Mangatobi worried.
'Oh, it is nothing. Don't worry about that. This mob can't do nothing', Pimparamparungi reckoned.
'All right.'
The next day Minapini saw Kantilla and Portamini leave the camp. He went after them:
'Hey, you mob go!'
Next Minapini said to Kantilla and Portamini, 'Hey, what time we go kill 'em this mob?'
'Wait, wait', said Kantilla, 'Wait. Don't worry about that, one day, you know. Only when we get ready. Yeah, we gotta meeting place, what day we gonna do that, kill these people.'
'What about now? We gonna kill 'em!', Minapini name him. He want to kill them straight away. [The tellers stressed Minapini's eagerness to kill.]
'No, no. We can't', his elder 'brothers' said, 'but when time come, we do that.'
('You know, that Pimparamparungi smart, you know, he might finish 'em, people, you know', a raconteur added his comment.)
Minapini disagreed, 'Maybe this mob turn around, and he kill 'em all ... from Tikelaru, Rangku, Malau.'

'No, no, they can't', Portamini and Kantilla reassured him.

The following morning Kantilla went to look for a suitable place in Matalau to have the next dance ceremony (an *ilanigha* was performed every second day). He found an open space near the mangroves bordering the salt water creek. Kantilla looked at the tide running out. When the water would go out it would leave a plain dancing ground, an ideal spot to trap Milewuri's sons because it was a boggy place (note that this was the same kind of place as where Piyimpiwi was killed). Kantilla went into the salt water and pushed three sticks in a line in the mud floor. Thereafter, he returned to the camp. Kantilla told the people they had to prepare themselves for the next dance ceremony early in the afternoon. He informed his companions the tide would be out and instructed them on his strategy for the forthcoming ambush: 'We gotto walk, keep going dance (*yoi yoi yoi*). When we see that number three stick there we hit them there.' They agreed, 'Yes, all right.' One of the tellers commented: 'From there everybody hungry, you know, hungry to kill these people, Pimparamprungi-mob. They smart too, you know. They kill lot of people that mob, man, woman, kids...'

People painted up for the ceremony with yellow and red ochres, and dressed themselves in ceremonial ornaments such as goose-feather balls, false beards, armbands and rings. The painted geometrial and colourful designs had a striking effect on people's naked bodies, decorated with cicatrices. The bodies of the men were covered with scars in the shape of the two-sided barbed spears (cf. Basedow 1913). The sneak attackers used red ochres exclusively, as a granddaughter of Milewuri pointed out: 'But Minapini and Kantilla, they did use anything ... and they get all in red, because they got spear them ... make them die today. They didn't put yellow! And all in red, all in red ... they got murder people today.'[39]

Kantilla and his companions walked them to the predetermined place. 'See that stick there', Kantilla said, 'We go there, dance there.' 'What about that on top there?', Pimparamprungi suggested. 'No, no good there, bad place', Kantilla reckoned, 'That better place.' The same informant further explained these proceedings: 'If they should go on top there this mob would be finished, all that Kantilla-mob, but lucky Kantilla he been taking way muddy place.'

The people all went to 'that paddock' where they performed crocodile dances. Mangatobi composed a song for this occasion [he might have made it at a later date as it reflects his fate but my informants insisted he sang it then]. When he had sung it for the first time the group of men on the edge of the ceremonial ring took over the singing of his text, beating time with their hands at the side of their legs, while Mangatobi and his brothers danced:

Peiapuna (name of a bird, the heron,
considered the crocodile's mother) calls out.
[That is, the singer was warned.]
People are chasing him (the crocodile)

whereupon dives he down in creek
and comes out at other side.

Korupu's grandson inferred Mangatobi had become suspicious, 'must have peeked here' (his orientations in telling were as if he was his grandfather on the scene). Korupu turned around. He had a look: 'Oh shit, they got no balls (*waruma*) left, only all skin.'

In their excitement, the prospective killers' scrotums had tightened so their testicles were no longer visible. Men in the chorus next to Korupu also looked and read the sign: 'Oh shit, they been ready to kill 'em those people.' Milewuri's sons went on dancing crocodile. Korupu tried to warn Mangatobi by scratching him with his fingernails (a conventional way to warn someone of a danger; note that the sneak attackers clipped their fingernails, as they did not recognise their social bonds with their victims). Mangatobi immediately told it to Pimparamparungi:
'Hey, he has been scratching me again, hard one too.'
'Ooh, it is nothing this mob', Pimparamprungi said.
'No! But about this one, look blood! Hmmm', Mangatobi showed him.
'Nothing that mob, they can't do nothing', his brother repeated.
Korupu knew he had to do something to get the message through. He instantly composed the following song accompanying a next crocodile dance:

They have no balls left (*ninka*, nothing),
trouble is coming on soon for this one skin group (clan).

Minapini poked Kantilla with his foot (a sign of friendship, here employed to alert him). Milewuri's sons in the ceremonial ring now understood what was going on. Minapini quickly turned around because Korupu had 'been waking up that mob'. He untied his bundle of spears with his toes, picked up a spear and turned around.

Minapini's spear hit Mangatobi (the teller's cracking of knuckles marked the sound of the spear contacting the victim's chest). Mangatobi had moved as well; therefore, the spear only tipped him in his right flank from behind. The sneak attackers now had all had gone for their spears. All other people were running away, trying to get themselves to safety. In the meantime, Minapini speared two of Mangatobi's brothers to death.

All went for Pimparamprungi. He had a bundle of spears too but the suddenness of the attack forced him to leave them behind. He ran fast. 'They try, three, four spears, couldn't catch him. He run like hell, no matter boggy place.' The pursuers picked up their spears, carried them up, and chased after him. Pimparamprungi nearly reached the mangroves. 'Oh, come on you mob, get him properly!', Kantilla, who had no spears, called out, 'Quick (*purka*)!' 'Oohh, give me that spear!', he ordered. A man pulled a spear out of a corpse and handed it to Kantilla. He broke it in half. Then, 'he chuck that spear...bang... [cracking of knuckles]' It cut Pimparamprungi's tendon from behind and went out through the knee, '...pum...that spear came out this way.'[40] Pimparamprungi fell flat out.

Kantilla turned around. He did not want to look. They pincushioned Pimparamprungi's body with a dozen spears. Someone tried to hit Pimparamprungi with a small axe but Korupu intervened: 'Hey, stop, stop!', Korupu yelled, 'Don't do that. He is all right. Spear all right. You can't kill him with tomahawk, you know. He is not wood, that's spear enough. (...) You don't need one axe. They got to die soon.'

One of the brothers, Mangatobi, had managed to escape with a spear in his side. Still performing the crocodile dance with zig-zag manoevres he dived into the creek and disappeared in the mangrove swamps. The tide was out. Mangatobi walked over the air roots of the mangrove trees so he would not leave tracks behind in the mud. He broke off the spear between a forked branch of a tree. The attackers ran after him. They were looking for his tracks but could not find him, and let him go.

Pimparamparungi happened to be still alive. Kantilla showed him his father's 'letterstick'. 'Look, you know what happened?', he said to Pimparamparungi, 'You been killing that cripple man before, you, name Piyimpiwi. Your father sent letter to us, Tikelaru, Rangku, and Malau, Murnupwi, like that. This what happened, you killed him off. Sorry, we don't wanna kill you, only you father make trouble, but you mob killed blind man. While that finished, no more trouble again, finished.' Kantilla thus made clear to Pimparamprungi the reason why he and his brothers had been attacked. With the killings at Matalau a balance had been reached, and therewith the 'trouble' had been terminated as far as the leader of the punitive expedition was concerned. Minapini employed a visual sign to indicate the accomplishment of the counter-killings: he stuck his spears in the ground beside the bodies of his victims. [Jerome would re-enact this by pushing an iron bar, denoting a spear, in the earth next to Tobias' corpse (cf. chapter 4).] The attackers went to the creek and painted their bodies with white pipeclay.

A raconteur, whose dreaming is the crocodile, gave the story of the fight mythical proportions in stating: 'Irekopei (crocodile) was there [in the creek], but they didn't fight that alligator.' In other words, Mangatobi (Mangatobi is the name of a crocodile) had got away alive. In the mangrove swamps he met up with an old woman. She helped to hide him from his pursuers and removed the remainder of the spear from his chest. Afterwards, Mangatobi returned to the Snake Bay area in his country Wulurangku. In due time, he replaced his father Milewuri as the 'big man' in Wulurangku. Like his father he had many wives and children, and his descendants still dominate local politics in Snake Bay. In the beginning of the 1930s, an Australian patrol officer arrested Mangatobi at Woolawunga in the north of the Apsley Strait.[41] He had leprosy and was deported to the leper colony on Channel Island in Darwin harbour, and there he died. Tiwi perceive leprosy as a punishment for a wrong or the violation of a taboo effectuated by *amputji*, the Rainbow Snake. As one of the tellers pointed out, 'but he died at his turn, Channel Island.'

The four victims were buried together in one hole. Thereafter, the attackers went south to the place where Piyimpiwi had been buried to perform the final mortuary rituals for him.[42] Then they turned back and held a joint concluding mortuary ritual (*iloti*) for Milewuri and his killed sons. Minapini and Kantilla performed songs and dances that had the crocodile and the mullet fish, the dreamings of the deceased, as their main theme. Finally, they went back to their countries.

The story of the killings at Matalau is very popular among the Tiwi. The narrative might be seen as an inversion of the less-well-known myth of Irekopei.[43] It explains how Tiwi came to possess the barbed spears used by sneak attackers. According to this creation myth, Irekopei, the Crocodile Man, lived near Cape Fourcroy in the country Tikelaru. Irekopei was the first to make heavy multi-barbed spears, but he refused to teach his spear-making skills to Tiwi people from Melville Island. These people decided to kill him. They snuck up and threw their spears at the man's back. Irekopei, with his bundle of barbed spears in his arms, dived into the sea. After a while they saw something come up to the surface. The man had turned into the first crocodile. Irekopei's large, wide-open mouth was the result of his screaming in pain. The bundle of spears had turned into his tail, with one barbed side of a spear upwards. The people who killed Irekopei and their descendants became known as the 'crocodile people'. From then on Tiwi people carved their own barbed spears in imitation of Irekopei.

In the narrative of the killings at Matalau, time, place, and the actors are reversed. Minapini came from Cape Fourcroy in Tikelaru to Melville Island in order to spear reputed killers of the 'crocodile people' (their dreaming was the crocodile, they all had crocodile names, and their dance depicted the myth mentioned above). The events in the myth of Irekopei initiated the era of sneak attacks with barbed spears, whereas the dramatic killings at Matalau were the last big event in which the old-style sneak attackers (*kwampi*) figured at the conclusion of this era. As mentioned before, this Tiwi institution ceased to exist as a result of the enforcement of Anglo-Australian law on the islands. The killings at Matalau thus became its last episode.

The narrative contains several mythical dimensions; for instance, the mullets that jump over the water and the crocodile Irekopei in the creek. Real people, familiar and related to the raconteurs and the audience, gained the proportions of mythological ancestors. Only the main characters have a symbolic significance and their roles are elaborated on. The events take place in a familiar setting and adorn the tracks and locations with new meaning (not unlike the shaping of the landscape by mythological ancestors in creation myths). The narrative might also be seen as a foundation story of Snake Bay.[44] The graves of Milewuri and his sons, the presence of their spirits, legitimate their descendants' rights in the area. (The present township Milikapiti is named after Milewuri.) Some people still felt

uncomfortable in the neighbourhood of the burial place. A forty-year-old woman told me:

> The spirits of those four men are still there at Banjo beach. They are completely painted up. They stay in the mangroves there. Some people have seen them all painted up, there at the beach. I have never seen them, but you can feel...feel someone staring at you. I don't know, you feel funny.

The narrative of the killings at Matalau is a story people can relate to, about people to whom they are closely related, and whose positions vis-a-vis each other are well-known. Seemingly trivial details suffice to bring the whole sequence of events to mind; these reveal a whole world to the audience. A swift movement with the shoulder in the crocodile dance, for instance, represents Mangatobi being speared by Minapini. The ambush at Matalau was the subject matter of many songs I recorded. Often aspects of the story were used as metaphors in other contexts, such as the singers dealing with a conflict they were involved in, uttering grievances, expressing emotions in mourning; the dramatic fourfold killing was exemplary of killing as a prominent symbol of transition (cf. chapter 6). In short, Tiwi actors selectively made use of events and characters of the past in their discourse about the current state of affairs.[45] Following Macdonald, the Aboriginal fight story might be seen as 'a historical tale which concerns one's own people and which highlights the enduring dynamics of social relations and social processes' (1988: 180). I will try to demonstrate that the fight story not only 'highlights' but also serves a function, enabling Tiwi performers to work out indetermined situations (Moore 1975) in social action.

3.4 Minapini's life history

Minapini was born near Cape Fourcroy in Tikelaru (southwest Bathurst Island) approximately in the 1870s. From there he went on the punitive expedition to Matalau. He was a son of a man of the Red Woollybutt Blossom clan (*arikitoruwi*). This clan, in line with preferential Tiwi marriage in one's father's clan, did not give women to Minapini. The pull of the Bathurst Island Mission, taking in ever more young Tiwi females, probably already had become too great. This forced several men from Tikelaru, Minapini's relatives, to marry their own half-sisters (father's daughters of a different clan). According to my informants, who gave a number of examples, it occurred because 'they were short of women'. The flexibility of the Tiwi kinship system allowed for these marriages but the Roman Catholic mission strongly disapproved. As a result of this, people born from these marriages who later came to live at the mission tried to hide their real genealogical background from the mission personnel (cf. Berndt & Berndt 1988: 84). Minapini was in a favourable position vis-à-vis some of his fellows in that he appeared to have a say, or was able to enforce it, in the future (re)marriages of his sisters (also of the Mosquito clan,

wulintuwila). In the 1920s, according to Hart, the people in Malau, in the north of the island, had not yet come under the mission's sphere of influence (Hart & Pilling 1960). Men from Malau 'called out for Minapini'. They were interested in obtaining his sisters as wives, and also in having an able fighter as their political client.[46]

Minapini 'swap 'em up all his sisters' and took them with him to Malau. There he married them off to a man of the Stone clan (*pungalunila*), named Summit, whose country of origin was Tikelaru (although his decendants claim Rangku) as well. Thereafter, Summit and his brother Tupiamini gave clan sisters to Minapini. Minapini received four wives in return. Summit turned out to be a clever marriage broker. He had acted as an agent for an influential man, one of his clan elders from Malau, called Walamurupwi, a 'really big man' who 'didn't shop out all his daughters' but passed them to Summit. Summit handed Walamurupwi's first and prepubescent daughter, Tunaniu or Ampuluwuramau, to Minapini. Minapini acquired at least two other women of this Stone clan, one of them Tautumau, Tobias' future mother. Furthermore, in this exchange of 'sisters' Summit helped Minapini to obtain a fourth wife. To enbroaden his scope to arrange marriages for himself, Summit simply declared that his clan and a closely allied clan (*aringkuwila*), apparently with weak Malua leaders, were one (cf. Brandl 1971: 114). This amalgamation of clans enabled him to give a 'sister' of the latter clan to Minapini among others. In due time, Summit became a 'big man' with many wives.[47] He and Tupiamini were notorious fighters. Minapini assisted them in their fights. In the early 1940s, in a locally famous battle at Pignanappi beach (in the north of the Apsley Strait on Melville Island), Minapini was said to be 'the first who took his goose-feather ball (*tokwainga*) in his mouth', a sign of aggression, meaning he initiated the fight. It occurred because a man who had lost all his possessions in a card game had put his daughter at stake. The little girl had been promised to an old man from Mandiupwi (in the southwest of Melville Island) but was lost in the game to a man from Malau. The fight was said, by two men who had participated, to have continued for two weeks. The antagonists in this trouble lined up opposed to each other at the beach when the tide was out, and fought each other taking turns with sharpened throwing clubs. The fight ended when men on both sides were injured.

Minapini was characterised as a 'tough man' (*arini*), a 'real murderman' (*kwampini*). Such a trait helped to deter one's competitors and earned the man in question prestige. Tobias told me his father was a 'bad boy, he killed seven people'. Not all homicides, however, were justified (e.g., the killing of Piyimpiwi). Like Pimparamprungi, Minapini killed irrespective of proper justification. Young Tiwi men used to hang around in the mangroves 'hunting' for the younger wives of old men gathering food. The amorous suitor waved with his hand painted inside. If the woman consented, she sneaked away and they had sex. A young woman of the Stone clan, with no children yet, in Malau resisted Minapini's advances. He sneaked up and waited until she was isolated from the other women,

gathering waterlily roots by herself. Minapini then speared her to death. The killing of women and children, if they were strong and healthy, was considered wrong. I was told Minapini's youngest wife Martha (she died in May 1989) never left his side, for he had threatened that if she had an affair with another man he would immediately spear her.

The mortuary ritual for Minapini's young daughter Tumunomau, who died of a sickness, is an indication of his rising prestige in his Malau years. In terms of 'the struggle for prestige and influence' described by Hart, Minapini seems to have been a 'coming man' (Hart & Pilling 1960). She 'got a funeral like a Queen, princess' at Purkali'inga (on the other side of the Apsley Strait from Garden Point). Many people attended the rituals. Minapini's 'brother' Mukankum invented a new dance about a sailing dinghy. It became a favourite dance of the actual and classificatory descendants of Minapini and his 'brothers' (also to be performed in the mortuary rituals for Tobias). The girl's mother was stolen from Minapini by his 'brother' Purimini. They had a fight over her. Tobias would even accounts by fighting over the wife of Purimini's son Sam, his 'brother'. I recorded a number of cases in which a younger brother stole one or two wives of an elder brother. The elder brother let them be because they were too closely related. The younger brother had some rights to his senior brother's wives as well, and often obtained these women after the latter's death; before that a wife of his could be the younger brother's lover. Purimini, for instance, stole two young wives from Popuanunanpunga, who did nothing about it 'because Purimini was his brother'.

In 1938, according to Tobias, Minapini attempted to return with a group of people to his country of origin, Tikelaru. 'It's my country', he had said, 'Follow me!' When they arrived there by canoe, four blackened saplings stood on the beach, connected with a string. The message was clear: 'nobody pass'. Nevertheless, Minapini went ashore. Therewith, as a trespasser, he broke a 'law' made by his mother's brother Old Wangok, Turimpi's firstborn son (cf. Hart 1954). The uncle approached Minapini with a spear. Minapini grabbed the spear and 'got cranky' but he was not allowed to return to his country ever again. The 'Law' was very strong in those days, Tobias explained. He added that the 'Law' was still very strong, for he was not allowed there either. It is an extremely severe punishment for Tiwi people to be banned from their country because they belong to that land and strongly identify with it.[48] The event, of course, diminished Minapini's prestige. Roger Imalu, a principal 'traditional owner' under the Land Rights Act, told me Tobias was 'nothing' because 'no one knows who his grandfather is!', meaning Tobias had no rights in his country, the country where his father's father Mirkutimalia was buried (or as Tiwi say, 'lives'). Therefore, Tobias could not be nominated as a delegate to the Tiwi Land Council.

After the episode at Tikelaru, Minapini went to Garden Point with his family. He worked for the government ration depot, and thereafter for the so-called half-caste mission. A number of women said, 'Minapini killed [hit]

his wife in front of the mission' (some said 'in front of Welfare', that is, the Native Welfare Branch of the Department of Native Affairs responsible for the government depot). He had to put on the hair shirt., an old flour bag, and to stand up in the vicinity of the mission buildings for one week, according to my informants. A woman of mixed decent who was brought to the half-caste mission as a young girl recalled Minapini was in the habit of severely beating his wife, Tobias' mother. Her son Jacob (therewith favourably contrasted to Tobias) frequently took her to the convent, she said, to have her wounds dressed by a nun. Two older Tiwi women said that they were always warned about Minapini, 'Watch out for that man, he spear, cunning, crook, killing.' A man of mixed descent, also raised at the mission, remembered Minapini as a tall man with a beard who always carried a bundle of spears in one arm and 'fighting sticks' (clubs) in the other. He did so because he was 'one of those killermen'. He camped under the mango trees behind the mission buildings. When the mission boys teased him, he spat ('they spit when they really go for one'), chased them, and eventually threw a barbed spear. Tobias once told me that during the 'Japanese War' military personnel asked his father, 'You did killing today?', whereupon he would answer in the negative. It was said, according to him, 'Old man is really a criminal.' Tobias, who volunteered this information, stressed that his father had stopped killing people. In the tense situation wherein he found himself at the time, it seemed so important to Tobias that he referred me to Simon Pamantari, an influential man, to have it confirmed. The man of mixed descent cited above said Minapini had always been a strong man, but around 1950, Minapini went to Paru for one week and died there; the informant said he had never understood why.

In contrast to Kantilla, who had become a Catholic and was buried at the Catholic graveyard of the Bathurst Island Mission, Minapini resisted the priest who wanted to baptise him. 'I want to go hell', he said. Their respective positions reflect a split in the Tiwi population of the 1950s between people who had become (nominal) Catholics and a shrinking group of 'pagans'. Minapini, who had named himself Mopaditi ('devil' or spirit of the dead), was buried out in the bush on Melville Island. The Catholic mission suppressed Tiwi rituals, and when a few months later the postfuneral rituals (*iloti*) for Minapini were in progress, the priest in charge came across the Apsley Strait to disturb the ceremony. He pushed against the mortuary poles at Minapini's grave, to his later regret, as in his words 'these symbols of paganism had to be destroyed' (Fallon 1991).

3.5 A man in trouble

We have seen that Tobias met with several strokes of bad luck in his life: He lived in exile from his country, lost two daughters, speared his brother, and his three wives met untimely deaths. The violent death of his last wife

Marylou seemed to have broken his spirit. Tobias told my wife and I he was very tired and thought he would not live long.

Then, a month before his death, he had an affair with his former lover Jasmine, a woman of the Pandanus clan (*miartinga*). In the preceding months he had lived up to the mourning taboos that did not allow the surviving spouse to have sexual intercourse until the mortuary rituals for the deceased had been accomplished. This affair got the widower in trouble, as the woman had been promised and married to someone of another clan (*aringkuwila*). Tobias started to think about taking her as his wife. He composed a song claiming Jasmine as his wife that he planned to perform in front of her husband in the next yam ritual at the end of the wet season:

> She loves me.
> You can do nothing about it!
> If I want she can be my wife.

Let me review whether she could be Tobias' wife indeed.

Although Summit had declared Tobias' clan (*pungaluwila*) and the woman's husband's clan (*aringkuwila*) were one in order to make his marriage deals, this fusion of the two clans had not taken hold. Some people acknowledged it, others did not (cf. Brandl 1971). As the woman was promised to a man of the clan last mentioned (an *aringkunila*), it was felt she should 'go to *aringkuwila'*. In November 1991, in a fight between an adulterer and his wife with her brothers, for instance, a grandmother (MMZ) of the adulterer tried to terminate the fight by pointing out to her grandson he had been wrong by taking a lover of the Pandanus clan. She called out to him: 'You mob didn't go for *miartiwi* [the Pandanus clan] first.' In other words, his matriline within his clan was not and had not been engaged in an exchange of partners with the Pandanus clan and, therefore, he could not have a woman of this clan (diplomatically leaving aside the issue of adultery). Technically speaking, Tobias' situation was somewhat more complicated. He had a case to argue, for his clan and the clan his girlfriend had been promised to are one and the same. But this argument might have failed to find support because the amalgation of both clans was not acknowledged by all. Nevertheless, his father had married a woman of a closely allied if not fused clan. As a result of this marriage, Tobias had (albeit deceased) sisters of the clan his girlfriend had been promised to (*aringkuwila*). If the clans were amalgamated, women of his own and alternating generations of the Stone clan called *aringkuwila* had to be Tobias' clan sisters too. (Or else they were somewhat more distantly related 'sisters' and the case was even more disputable.) A clan sister of Jasmine's husband, and arguably a clan sister of Tobias as well, had been given to Jasmine's brother. Therewith the exchange of partners between the respective clans was made 'level'. In short, Tobias claimed he could 'take over' Jasmine from her husband if she decided to leave him because a 'clan' sister of Tobias had already been given for her in return. Besides, as a

preferential rule of marriage, Jasmine ought to marry in her father's clan: this happened to be Tobias' clan.

Jasmine's father was dead. To negotiate an eventual future marriage with his girlfriend, Tobias should have dealt with her stepfather and her senior clan brothers. The stepfather happened to be Tobias' mother's clan brother, his 'full uncle' Isaac Pamantari.[49] When he was a young man, Isaac had received his first wife from Minapini after she had become a widow. (She died when she had rolled into her campfire intoxicated, and her husband was with his lover, Jasmine's mother.) Jasmine's father decided that after his death his classificatory brother Isaac had to 'take over' his wife. In previous years, Isaac had claimed Tobias' eldest daughter, but she did not want him. Isaac was adamant about Jasmine being his daughter. When Isaac found out Tobias had an affair with her, he strongly disapproved.

Jasmine's senior clan brother Jerome Pamantari was another man who did not like to see her with Tobias. Tobias' second wife Kate, a woman of the Pandanus clan like Jasmine, had been Jerome's maternal half-sister. Jerome claimed Tobias had never given him a woman in return for his sister. Why should he allow Tobias to have a second 'sister' if he had not yet squared back the first? Besides, Jerome was after a clan sister of Tobias (cf. chapter 5). Both Isaac and his classificatory son Jerome wanted Tobias to arrange women for them before he eventually could take Jasmine as his wife. It must be noted that Tobias, from a ego-centred point of view, could argue he had become 'level' with Isaac, for this man had had his father's sister. Isaac, however, appeared to perceive it as a different matter. Jerome surely did not want to give up two of his clan sisters for free. A violation of the rules of reciprocity in the exchange of marriage partners between clans is taken as a serious wrong. Brandl, for instance, reports a case from the end of the 1960s of a man who had been 'poisoned' because he 'had two wives from one clan and had done nothing about arranging that women from his own clan be exchanged for them' (1971: 476, 474-8). Jasmine was still married to her promised husband.

Tobias first ran into conflict with Jasmine's husband, Andrew Munuluka. He had a fight with the deceived husband, who in the words of Pilling 'has a right to punish the man who has made him a cuckold' (1958: 44; cf. Hart & Pilling 1960). A blow with a club on his head left a scar but it did not stop him from seeing Jasmine. Tobias, pointing to the scar on his forehead, told me that he did not care.

Then his neighbour Isaac Pamantari turned against him. A woman who also lived in the Old Camp said she had to take away a small axe from Isaac several times when he was pursuing Tobias. 'He got wild', she explained, because Tobias 'called Jasmine his wife.' Tobias' statement implied an attempt to seduce Jasmine, and as Pilling rightly points out, 'Her father was stated to possess the right to act against whosoever may improperly try to secure his daughter' (1958: 44).

Furthermore, Tobias' relationship with his 'brother' Sam Kerimerini, who lived in the Old Camp as well, was one of tension. Sam's wife Nancy had been Tobias' lover for many years. Tobias even openly said that her second son was his. Their long affair had ended some time ago when Tobias had maltreated her and deformed her nose with a blow from a club. She said she no longer wanted him. Sam fought his 'brother' Tobias. He told me he used his fists (suggesting he gave him a fair go) and as an experienced boxer came out of the fight as the winner. The fight gave justice to the aggrieved husband and terminated the extramarital affair. According to the local police constable, there had been no fist-fighting between Sam and Tobias, but they had fought each other with large clubs. When Nancy had her nose broken, 'Sam had given what he could'. The policeman had locked them up in the cells of the local Police Station overnight. In his opinion Tobias could be 'a pain in the ass' when he was drunk.

Tobias often teased Sam. One night, for instance, he had come to the Social Club and told everybody he had given me the name of Purimini. Initially Nancy had adopted me as her 'son'. In being the first to name me, Tobias acted as my principal father (cf. Hart 1931). Indirectly he thus claimed Sam's wife by strategically donating Sam's father's name to me, overruling him. Sam response was to give me two other names. From then on he would always greet me saying, 'My son, my own son. Your daddy (*ringani*) here, [I made you] important, two names.' (After Tobias' violent death the name Tobias gave me became taboo.) It would lead us too far afield to describe all the frictions between these 'brothers'. Ideally they had to cooperate, but there was also competition between them for the same category of potential spouses. Tobias could expect little support from his elder 'brother' Sam because he had made him a cuckold and he had killed their common clan brother Jacob.

Friction also existed between Tobias and Karl Hansen, who lived with Laura in the Old Camp. Karl demanded a share of Tobias' income because his girlfriend Laura cared for her father. Tobias did not want to give him money. He 'growled' at him instead, because Karl maltreated Laura, who had told her father that she was pregnant. When a namesake of Karl died Tobias turned up with a new name for him. From then on Laura's 'husband' was called Andy. This happened to be the name of a mentally disturbed man who had lived on Bathurst Island (cf. Pilling 1958: 62). Tobias told me that he thought Karl was 'no good in the head'; he did not trust him. Another man distrusted by Tobias was Isaac's classificatory brother Oscar Pamantari. This man had sired the first child of Tobias' eldest stepdaughter Ruth. That this man drove around in the township on a loader the whole day showed he was silly, according to Tobias.

Tobias himself, in continuing his affair with Jasmine, provoked her 'relations' into using moral and eventually physical violence towards him. His antagonists warned him that the conflict would escalate. They mobilised support by revitalising old grudges and sought to ostracise Tobias.

On the first of October, 1988, Tobias' brother-in-law Jerome, the man who had given him his half-sister of the Pandanus clan and said he had not had a woman in return, became angry with him at the Social Club. My wife and I were sitting in the Social Club with Jerome and Nancy. Tobias joined us. When Tobias left for a moment to get beer, Jerome told us that Tobias could not be trusted. He said Tobias had killed his own brother with a spear in his side. He repeated this accusation several times and said Tobias' father was a killer. The previous night, according to Jerome, Tobias had been chasing after 'that old man', meaning Isaac, with an axe. Nancy in these circumstances had to speak up for her 'relation', her 'brother' Jerome (her MFDS): She added that she had tried to take the axe away from Tobias (without mentioning that earlier Isaac had run after him with an axe). She began yelling loudly at Tobias as he returned. Nancy said that his father Minapini had killed her 'fathers' (FBs). In other words, instead of directly speaking of their disapproval of Tobias' affair with Jasmine, they raised a number of grievances suggesting Tobias was mischievous. Tobias did not respond to the allegations.

He continued his affair with Jasmine. My wife acted as a go-between. Unfortunately, in time Tobias' girlfriend became more demanding. She started to ask for more and more money. Tobias hestitated to give in to her demands, because he knew it would cause more trouble. He reminded us of the scar on his forehead. In the night of October the 8th, after a renewed request for money, Tobias had Jasmine with him in his hut. The day after, he told us that he had had an unexpected visitor: 'That fat lady came to me last night. She was with me. And then came her husband. They asked me for money.' Tobias refused to pay the man who was made a cuckold any compensation, although this would have settled the matter. Both Jasmine and Andrew went away angry. Tobias said it was difficult for him, particularly because she was 'a nice lady': 'It's a hard time for me. I don't want troubles. That lady, when she is with me she reminds me of my own lady [his deceased wife]. I'm having a hard time.'

On October the 15th, Tobias acted as a ritual worker (*ambaru*) in the final mortuary ritual for a man of the Pamantari family. At the instigation of Isaac, the killings at Matalau became the main theme of the postfuneral ritual. At the end of the rituals the workers, including Tobias, received their payment. They were symbolically paid with barbed spears (standing for money at this particular ritual occasion). The accompanying song series related how Minapini had speared the victims who had neglected Korupu's forewarning. Every time Isaac and his relatives gave out money, and made the dance movement of spearing the recipient, they called out: 'Matalaula!' (people from Matalau) and '*ninka*!' ('nothing', that is Korupu's warning that the visitors were ready to kill because their testicles were no longer visible, more freely translated 'spears get in, get out!' or 'look out!'). The warning that people were prepared to kill fit in with the ritual context but Tobias

understood it also as a hidden message directed at himself. To avoid an escalation of a conflict Tiwi people in trouble usually move away from the place where they are living. Tobias immediately fled to Milikapiti.

The next day, however, he returned to Pularumpi. He seemed determined not to stay for long. We worked until late at night to get the translations of songs he had previously performed for me on paper. Tobias insisted on this because, so he pointed out, there would be no other time, for he would leave for Milikapiti any moment, possibly the following day. The songs dealt with, among other things, his father's banishment from Tikelaru and his sad longing for his country, fights over women, fights between brothers, and his planned song cited above about claiming Jasmine as his wife. For one reason or another he prolonged his stay in Pularumpi. He dreamt a lot - always a sign for Tiwi that one is in trouble (cf. Pilling 1958: 111). He had one extraordinary dream about a mortuary ritual. Simon Pamantari was singing. Just before Tobias awoke they asked the question 'What shall we do?' Simon later would ask this question at the inquest after Tobias' violent death. Tobias thought it had something to do with the Pamantari family. He went to tell Simon, Bill, Isaac and other men of this patrilineage, to which his girlfriend belonged, about it.

Tobias' plans to leave Pularumpi were a theme of our conversations. On October the 18th, in a mortuary ritual on Bathurst Island, he was a ritual worker again. Tobias sang: 'All the smoke comes in my eye and I dance.' Tobias had trouble with his eyes; he complained of problems he had had with his eyes in the past. During the next week Tobias wore sunglasses. His eyes hurt, he said, 'like needles' had penetrated them. Tobias' eye-trouble might have had a deeper meaning. According to my informants it represented a feeling, *kumrupunari*, 'foggy, can't see properly' (from smoke, *kumuripini*). The song was performed by Tobias in *kulama* style. It seemed an allusion to the songs about the eyes in the yam ritual (*kulama*). Such a *pitjara* or eye-song was thought to be effective to 'see one's enemies better' in the future (see chapter 6). Also, Piyimpiwi was 'blind' and defenceless because he did not see his enemies. In the next week Tobias went to see the doctor at the hospital in Nguiu on Bathurst Island. He went with a party from Pularumpi. Among them were his pregnant daughter and his girlfriend, who was accompanying her sister. His girlfriend's sister was flown to Darwin Hospital. Tobias' trip to Bathurst Island with Jasmine raised suspicions (cf. Pilling 1958: 222). Soon the story went around Pularumpi that he had been 'going around' again with Jasmine. When they arrived at Nguiu, he should have said that he went to look for his son because he needed money. He came back too late to see the doctor. Tobias said that the doctor was too busy.

It is almost certain that Tobias felt the increasing tension in the community. He started to avoid Sam's camp, where he often played cards before. When we were sitting in the Social Club one night, Tobias invited me to Putjamirra Safari Camp. He worked there now and then as a guide.

He said he wanted to show me the place before it closed down for the wet season on the last day of October. Immediately, Jerome and Nancy, who were sitting nearby, reacted furiously. Tobias was untrustworthy because he had killed his brother. They told me I was in Pularumpi to study Tiwi culture, not to go to that 'bloody tourist camp'. As he had done before, Tobias stood up and went somewhere else. Another day Jerome had found Tobias in our place when he paid us one of his daily visits. The two men did not speak a word to each other.

One night in the week preceding his death Tobias said he had heard noises at the back of his hut in the Old Camp. Then he had seen a *mopaditi* (spirit of the dead) staring at him. The spirit stood at his window. Tobias had never experienced this before. 'I feel funny', he told me, 'It makes me nerves [nervous].' A vision of a *mopaditi*, painted up with white clay and holding a barbed spear, is an amonition of someone's death. It is usually a (grand)father or spouse of the dying person (Tobias' father called himself Mopaditi, or death devil). It impressed Tobias so much that he asked me to put in new bulbs on his verandah and in his one-room hut. Fires and electric lights (and mirrors, according to some) keep the spirits of the dead at bay.

On October the 28th, Sam's elder brother Bruce came with a dinghy from Nguiu to Pularumpi. I was told he wanted his share in the A$4,000 tax return his son had received. First he had visited Sam's camp. After that he went to see Tobias at his hut in the Old Camp. The two men had a talk. Bruce was carrying a gun. He said he wanted to shoot flying foxes in the mangroves on his way back to Bathurst Island. He left at two o'clock in the afternoon when the tide was right. Tobias had made a telephone call to Milikapiti. He planned to go there during the wet season that had just had set in. His daughter Heather had spoken against this idea and protested. Tobias made the sign (moving his hand, '*yep yep*') that she was talking 'too much'. It was no good, he said, for a daughter to speak to her father that way. A cattle truck in use to transport people left the Old Camp that afternoon. Andrew, the husband of Tobias' lover Jasmine, was brought to Paru on the Apsley Strait opposite Nguiu. His father on Bathurst Island was said to be very ill. It was expected he would die that night. Andrew would stay there for the night.

At four o'clock that afternoon I did not go to the Social Club. I did not want to fuel the disagreements between Jerome, Sam and Nancy on the one hand, and Tobias on the other. Jeanette and I sensed an enormous tension. Nancy later told me that Tobias had given her, her sister, and Jasmine a jar of beer in the Social Club and kissed them to say goodbye. He would leave for Milikapiti, 'looking for another girlfriend', he had added jokingly.

4 'NOW HE IS KILLED HIMSELF'

4.1 'The old man is finished'

About 6.40 on the morning of October the 29th, my Tiwi sister Maud knocked on the wall of our little house. She told she had bad news. 'The old man is finished', she said, 'He died last night...' In response to our reaction of disbelief and grief, she added, 'He had a shock.' Jeanette and I hurried to the Old Camp, where our dear friend Tobias had lived.

Tobias' body was lying under the mango tree in front of his hut. More precisely, the corpse, facing Sam's camp, was located beside a tap about three steps from the verandah of Isaac's hut.[50] Except for a pair of shorts, Tobias lay naked. Some fifteen Tiwi people, actual and classificatory relatives of the deceased, stood at a little distance (spatial distance reflecting social distance). The police constable had come to the scene and decided to cordon off the area surrounding the corpse with a white and red ribbon.

Nancy walked over to us to tell what was going on: 'That old man died yesterday night!' 'Too much beer. He drunk too much, too much sugar in his tea', she upheld a Western medical explanation suggested by the Aboriginal health workers, 'Doctor told him not to use sugar, his blood pressure was too high.' A few days earlier Tobias and a number of other Tiwi people had given blood to a medical team investigating diabetes. Tobias, however, had neither diabetes nor high blood pressure. But a medical explanation of the cause of his death was regarded as one possibility.

We went nearer and joined the close relatives of the deceased. When the policeman covered the corpse with a sheet, the people present started wailing loudly. They cried, bent their bodies, and wiped their eyes with their fingers. Following a death Tiwi wailing occurs at fixed intervals marking a symbolic tie-breaking with the deceased. At this stage, many people from the township came to the Old Camp. Some went to have a closer look at the scene; others remained at a distance.

Jerome, facing the dead body, told us, 'Maybe someone killed him or he killed himself.' He made a sign with his thumb on his side. I understood this as an allusion to the elder brother of the deceased, as Jerome was under the impression that Tobias had speared his brother in his flank.[51] 'They had a fight last night!', he said.[52] Although Jerome's words were rather undecisive I felt it inappropriate to elicit further comment. Jerome held a grudge against Tobias because he would not have given him a woman in return for his half-sister Kate. I assume Jerome knew or inferred there had been a fight. What mattered was that Tobias was dead. Previously, Jerome

had portrayed Tobias as a persistent wrongdoer. Had Tobias perhaps provoked his own violent death? In this case we might assume the homicide was justified at least in view of some Tiwi people. When in January 1989, for instance, a certain woman had affairs with several men, took away most of her mother's pension money, and left her young children on their own, a senior woman spontaneously said this woman had to be stabbed to death. Anybody could do it, according to her. With regard to Tiwi morals Jerome's allusion to the killing of Jacob Arapi at the hands of his younger brother Tobias, an ultimate wrong, did make sense. The hypothesis of Jacob's spirit having retaliated was surely not too far-fetched as a cultural possibility. In September 1989, Sam had his camp in the Old Camp temporarily evacuated after he said he had been attacked by the spirits of two 'brothers' because of his alleged negligence in relation to the violent death of a 'son' they had in common. The destructive actions of a spirit of the dead, always painted with white clay and holding a spear, were often given as an explanation for accidental killings.

Several men walked up to Tobias' hut. They looked around his verandah and turned. There were large patches of blood on the concrete floor of the verandah. The dead man's pipe lay carelessly aside. Obviously, his shirt had been dropped at the entrance of the verandah. These clues indicated that Tobias, who was said to be an able fighter, had been overpowered, taken by suprise or subjected himself to a punishment. I will come back to this point below. The just-re-elected community president was looking in the grass around Tobias' hut. He later told me he had been trying to find a knife. The town clerk also came to have a look. 'This is suspicious; there is something wrong here', he remarked. Both men, raised at the so-called half-caste mission, represented the community government council. The local Tiwi assigned some responsibility for maintaining law and order in the township to the council.[53] As the matter was already in the hands of the police, they could contribute little here. Jasmine visited the Old Camp too. She showed little emotion and remained at a distance. We left the Old Camp accompanied by Bill's daughter. 'Some people hated him', she said.[54]

About 7.45 a.m. we had breakfast together with Jerome at our place as usual. Afterwards, Jerome had to perform certain tasks as a ritual worker (*ambaru*). He belonged to this category of people because his sister had been married to Tobias. Among other things he would have to collect the dead man's clothes and personal belongings. These had become taboo (*pukamani*) after Tobias' death and therefore these things had to be destroyed, buried, or thrown into the sea (a ritual called *amaratruniripungari*). The tasks of the ritual workers (*ambaruwi*) could not be carried out by the dead man's relatives in other categories of bereaved kin, who were restricted by mourning taboos. Consequently, the latter became indebted to the ritual workers (cf. Hart & Pilling 1960: 91). This placed the ritual workers Jerome and Nancy in a strategic position. Although both had openly quarrelled with Tobias at the Social Club they now in a ritual role could

take advantage of the situation. They were in a position to display their willingness to help and cooperate in the performance of the mortuary rituals for Tobias. Tobias' children could do little without these people experienced in ritual matters.

Back in the Old Camp we passed Kevin's house. He sat on his verandah reading a newspaper, the *Northern Territory News*. Roy Mornington, his friend, leaned against the verandah. Kevin would assist Roy in skinning and roasting buffalo meat for the white headmaster's wedding that would take place in the afternoon. When asked, they said that Kevin had found the dead man early in the morning. In front of the following house, the one next to Tobias' place (empty because its occupant stayed in Darwin Hospital), the police constable and the Aboriginal police tracker discussed the situation. The constable said that according to the (Anglo-Australian) law, a post-mortem had to be done when a dead body was found under suspicious circumstances. He preferred a forensic pathologist to do it on the spot in order to minimalise intrusion in Tiwi affairs and mourning. If this could not be the case, the corpse would have to be sent to Darwin. The policeman had to talk with the close relatives of the deceased to have them to agree to a post-mortem.

Near the corpse, Bill Pamantari approached us. This grandson of Korupu had supported his 'brother' Isaac (FFBSS) in transforming Korupu's forewaring of Minapini's victims into warning Tobias off during a mortuary ritual two weeks earlier. 'He killed his elder brother with a spear', Bill said, pointing at the middle of his chest. 'Someone killed him', he said, 'He killed his brother, he killed his big brother with a spear...over there [Sam's camp].'[55] Bill's gesture of pointing to the chest in Tiwi body symbolism indicated his relationship to the deceased and the deceased's late brother.[56]

In the meantime Nancy performed a mourning song in *ambaru*-style. She walked back and forth along the footpath between Tobias' and Sam's place making strokes, as if beating, with one hand lifted in the air. Her conventional body posture and movements denoted a feature of her ritual role. The ritual worker symbolically has to chase away the spirits of the dead. Walking back and forward depicts a person making trouble. Sometimes a club or a fish-shaped board (*aruwalla*, used in fights in the past to dash off spears) in hand is added to the fighting posture. The ritual role is conventionally characterised by aggressiveness and sexual jealousy (*tulura*). Jerome instantly translated Nancy's mourning song: 'His father was a killer, now he is killed himself!'

In Sam's camp Betty Kerimerini, a 'daughter' of Tobias (FMSD), wanted to play cards. She was told off because she was restricted by mourning taboos and not allowed to play cards until a special cleansing rite with water had been performed. Some people were crying. Laura appeared to be in a state of shock. She sat silently and glared. Nancy continued her singing.

According to her daughter Maud she sang about what had happened: 'Yesterday they had heard something and now they had found him.' Nancy's sister Jessica, who used to live in Milikapiti, happened to stay in the Old Camp too. Tobias and Jessica had had an affair when both were young. When they were both widowed, Tobias composed a song saying he wanted her as his wife but she had refused, so I was told. Like her sister, Jessica walked back and forth performing an *ambaru*-song: 'You are singing long way now. You cannot come to sing with me.' Jessica stressed the physical distance Tobias' death had created between them. The singing (of love songs) in her text is an allusion to sexuality.

Nancy said that she herself sang about Minapini. 'He was a bad man. He killed a lot of people', she said, 'Someone killed him [Tobias].' Nancy had voiced an old grievance: Tobias' father had killed her 'fathers' at Matalau. She explained to other people in Tiwi that she and her husband were listening to their new music cassettes the previous night. Because the music was so loud they had heard nothing else. She said she would bring the two tapes (with Christian songs in Tiwi) back, one from her and one from Sam. Then to us: 'They had a fight over there, maybe they know. Someone must have walked around with a big crowbar, maybe Isaac, that he has done it, I don't know.' Moving with her head towards Isaac at a distance, 'Look that policeman is talking with him.' We saw the constable approaching Isaac and having a very brief communication with him. Isaac signalled with his head that he could not understand what the man was saying.

We all walked back from Sam's camp to Tobias' hut. At the back we sat down on a tarpaulin, waiting for the dead man's other children to come. The women were wailing. Betty dropped down and beat the ground with her fists. Her brother Jim wailed extremely loud. Simon Pamantari arrived at the scene. He sat down, together with two grandchildren, on a bed beside the hut. Against the corner of the verandah at the other side of the house lay a long iron bar. Nancy pointed out this piece of metal to me as the weapon with which Tobias would have been killed. Her eldest son Walter later told me a clan brother of Tobias had killed another man in this way at a similar spot, 'under the mango tree', in the Old Camp.[57]

Just after nine o'clock a truck came very fast on the main road towards the village. The small truck, loaded with people, turned off in the direction of the Old Camp. About 150 metres from Tobias' hut, a girl dropped from the rear of the truck. She landed on the front of her body, wailing loudly. Another woman, Tobias' stepdaughter Ruth Pamantari, threw herself from the fast-moving truck. She stayed on her back, crying with loud screams. Heather, another daughter, jumped out of the cabin. She dropped down on a piece of corrugated iron.[58] Her white husband brought the truck to a standstill. He, trembling, took her wrists to stop her from doing harm to herself. A young girl was wildly flailing around and hitting mainly herself. Nancy told her husband to hold her as one of 'your *mamurapi* [bereaved children]!'. Sam did not react. Nancy went to the girl and took her at the

wrists. The wailing of Tobias' children continued for a while. The relatives of those who were wailing and beating themselves have to give support to the latter and prevent serious injuries. The other women who were in the truck started wailing loudly as well when they saw the shrunken body covered with a sheet.

Jerome walked backward and forward along the inside of the ribbon. He held one hand in the air and performed an *ambaru*-song. It was a mourning song that he would repeat several times. The constable wrote a short note. The police tracker, Nancy's son Mike, went away with an empty piece of paper. Mike wore only track pants with a pair of plastic gloves in his belt.

Jerome entered Tobias' hut. He returned with a polaroid photo of Tobias. Jerome showed it to the dead man's daughters. They were immediately upset and started wailing and hitting again. Heather's husband took the photo and put it away. Jerome and Nancy's half-brother Alec Adranango, another ritual worker, re-entered the hut to collect Tobias' personal belongings. The door had been closed until Jerome entered for the first time. Under the bed lay the dead man's dog. A month before, Tobias had told me that he raised this dog (a crossbreed of a pitbull terrier and a campdog) to protect him. Its long teeth would easily bite out part of a man's leg, he said. The dog, however, now seemed to be shivering in fear. On a little table near the bed was some paper and small coins which Tobias used to give to people who came to borrow money. Jerome found the photographs of Tobias' last wedding and his marriage certificate under the mattress. He dropped the certificate and went outside to give the photographs to Tobias' children. This time they were not shown but put away immediately.

Mike returned with the police car. He gave an empty piece of paper, some kind of form, to the constable. He formally identified the deceased. Mike carried out his duties as a police tracker (in this he 'followed' his natural father Tobias) but he did not participate in the mourning sessions. The constable had told him that he did not have to work if he did not want to. A lot of people from the township were seated at a distance from the dead man's hut. Roger Imalu and Edmund Pamantari sat under a cashew tree. The previous night the bar had been closed at eight o'clock, according to Roger. It had been quiet in the Social Club. Tobias must have been one of the last to leave, said Edmund. Jeanette, my wife, talked with Jasmine. She said that 'someone killed him' and went on to play cards with some other women. Therewith she seemed to deny her previous relationship with the dead man.

From here we went to Sam's place. A special police plane flew over the Old Camp. Mike put on a shirt, taking up a formal Westernised role as a police tracker (Tiwi would instead take off their shirts). Mike had to go to the airstrip to get the pathologist and the coroner from the plane.

The people at Sam's camp moved back to the dead man's hut, where a new episode would be added to the happenings. About 10.15 a.m. the police car arrived at the scene. Mike, wearing his police hat, came out of the car. The other passengers were two men in shorts, the coroner and the pathologist, accompanied by a police sergeant in uniform. Their luggage consisted of three suitcases carrying a number of tools. They were briefed by the local constable; Mike remained at a distance, just outside the ribbon demarcation and close to the large group of mourners. The coroner took a few pictures of the place where the body was; he also took a shot of Tobias' hut. The men, however, did not pay attention to the verandah and the blood on it. They got a large plastic body bag out of one of the suitcases and unfolded it. They had to put the corpse in it, and went towards the body. One of the men pulled the sheet away.

Immediately a loud wailing started. Heather screamed and hit herself. Judy, another of Tobias' daughters, threw herself with force against the metal wall of the house next door. She tried to beat herself unconscious, slamming her head against the wall. Nancy grabbed the youngest daughter, Evelyn, and prevented her from doing herself more harm. Sam, her classificatory father, stood close by, but he did not do a thing. Karl, for the first time on the scene, picked his girlfriend Laura up from the ground. He had taken a shower and combed his hair.

The coroner made a few additional photographs of the position of the body, and the forensic pathologist examined the body more closely. Then the people from Milikapiti were allowed to view the corpse. The women fell flat on the ground next to their father's body. Loudly wailing, they hit themselves and the earth with their fists.

We saw a large stripe of dried blood on Tobias' back, from his neck down to his shoulder blade. There was such a line on the back of his head, too, where his grey hair was divided in two. Simon made a sign to me with his hand on the back of his head. 'He has a big cut there', he said. Simon, two days later, was of opinion that Tobias had been hit with the metal bar. It seemed to make sense, for a clan brother of Tobias had killed a man of another clan, who had attempted to lay his hands on a woman, in that way under the mango tree in the Old Camp in 1976. Even if it was not the cause of Tobias' death, the story that it was, and its credibility because of the visual signs, evened the score.

The policemen turned the body around. Tobias was lying on his back now; his hands were tensed, his fingers outstretched. His arms lay stiff on his breast. While the policemen were handling the body, the onlookers wailed. The men put the body in the plastic bag and closed it with a zip. Then they left for the police station. They were waiting for Tobias' son Ralph and stepdaughter Carol who had to come from Nguiu on Bathurst Island. The police wanted to give them the opportunity to view the corpse.

The demarcation ribbon had been taken away. Jerome walked back and forth near the body. One time he held his left hand in the air, the other time his right hand. He performed an *ambaru*-song: (Dead man saying) 'My

brother-in-law, you did not sing properly for me./I am the one who married your sister!/And I made a big family with your sister.' In the song Jerome admitted he had been sexually jealous of Tobias, his brother-in-law. People with many children had prestige in Tiwi society, and some less fortunate people tended to be envious. Nancy took her turn and sang an *ambaru*-song too. She walked backward and forward with one hand lifted as well. Then Jerome took the long iron bar (thought to be the weapon by Nancy and Simon) and stuck it in the earth in front of the body. This represented the pinning of a man-killing spear in the ground next to the victim by the sneak attackers (*kwampi*) of olden times. The most notorious sneak attacker had been Tobias' father, Minapini, who used to push his spear into the earth near his victim after a killing.

Heather yelled at the people from Pularumpi: 'You fucking coward, come out, you fucking... Who killed my father?'[59] Her half-sister Judy called out; 'If I was a man I would come on day, not on the night!' While she was yelling she looked at Isaac, who sat motionless on his verandah opposite Tobias' hut.

When they quieted down, Simon told the people from Milikapiti the story about the killings at Matalau. Simon attempted, when the people were gathered around the corpse, to let his people from Pularumpi speak about what had happened. No one responded. When I asked him what he thought had happened, Simon said, 'Yeah, someone killed him. I think they know, but people are frightened to say... I was playing cards over there [he pointed at a street light approximately 150 metres away]... We heard a lot of noise...but nobody went to look.'

The mourners had a break. The people from Milikapiti prepared wallaby meat they had brought with them. They neither shared the prized meat with the local people nor did they accept food from them, which indicates that they did not trust the people from Pularumpi. The food was cooked at a distance from the corpse because that location had become taboo.

Around 12.15 p.m. the cattle truck with football players from Nguiu approached Pularumpi. A stepdaughter and son of Tobias were among the people in the back of the truck. The son, Ralph, came walking in the direction of the house in the Old Camp, followed by four of his classificatory brothers. Ralph had a green army bag on his shoulder. Laura went towards him. When he had reached the back of Kevin's house he took the sleeve of his shirt and pushed it with two fingers on his eyes. He rubbed his fingers over his eyes, and walked with his head bent down. With the boy in front, people went back to the body. The body bag was unzipped. Ralph burst out in tears, and threw himself flat on the ground. At the other side of the body his half-sister Carol dropped down. They wailed loudly, bent over their father's body, and stared at his face. The expression of emotion by these two children triggered a new wave of wailing from the others.

The policemen came back; Tobias' corpse would be flown to Darwin for an autospy. The bag with Tobias' body was loaded on the back of the truck from Milikapiti to the sound of more loud wailing and crying. The close relatives of the deceased jumped on the back of the truck. A few other cars were also carrying a full load of people, and some people went to the airstrip by foot. Nearly all the local people had come to the airstrip. Tobias' children had to be restrained by other people. The policemen from Darwin tried to fit Tobias' body in the plane's left wing cargo compartment, dropping the lid violently on the body twice. The people wailed. The corpse was too big to fit into the compartment. Obviously annoyed, the policemen took a seat out of the plane and put the body bag in the passenger room. When the plane took off the mourners began wailing and crying again. Jack Munuluka, a classificatory father of Tobias from Nguiu, weaved a mourning song in *mamanakuni* style in his wailing (this style of singing could be employed by a 'father' of the deceased; I did not obtain the text of his song). Jack of the Mosquito clan was a grandson of Kantilla (SS), Minapini's companion and clan brother. As a result of the Tiwi system of alternate generations he was a 'father' of Tobias. This man would lead the final mortuary rituals for Tobias ten months later.

4.2 Interpersonal violence and moral violence

In this section I want to interrupt the description in trying to explain how the killing might have come about and how the initial reactions to the killing might be understood. I will refer to the events before Tobias' violent death and concentrate on the evolution of the main conflict he was involved in and relate these to Tiwi law-ways. This will bring us to a discussion about the nature of the violence inflicted.

Tobias was on bad terms with quite a number of people (including Karl Hansen, Oscar Pamantari, and Sam Kerimerini) but below I will focus on the main trouble he had become involved in. He became a widower again within the first half-year of his third marriage. Jasmine and Tobias had been lovers before. She desparately wanted to have a child, as childless women have no status at all in Tiwi society; they are, as Goodale puts it, 'social nonentities' (1971: 149; cf. Hart & Pilling 1960: 59). In the second half of 1987 she had become pregnant at last. On the day Tobias married Marylou in church, Jasmine had a miscarriage in the Old Camp after an exhausting day of hunting and drinking. She was grief-stricken.[60] A few months later, after the death of Tobias' wife, Jasmine and Tobias became lovers again. Tobias pointed out that he longed for her because she reminded him of his deceased wife. Jasmine's husband, the man to whom she had been promised, found out about the affair. The deceived husband had a right to punish Tobias. This would have settled the matter if Tobias had terminated his affair with Jasmine. The deceived husband abused his wife. Jasmine's

relatives gave her a baby of a classificatory sister to take care of. She and her husband Andrew later on would adopt the child.

Tobias prolonged his sexual relationship with Jasmine. It was then that Tobias got in trouble; he began to name Jasmine as his wife. Therewith the case of adultery turned into a case of wife-snatching. Isaac Pamantari, the stepfather of the woman, 'got wild' because Tobias unjustly attempted to secure his daughter, and raised a lethal weapon, an axe, that was taken away by a person intervening. The stepfather had moral support from his 'son' Jerome Pamantari (FFFSSSS), a senior clan brother of Jasmine. In trying to obtain Jasmine as his wife, Tobias violated the rules of reciprocity in the exchange of marriage partners between their respective clans (*keramili*, cf. chapter 2). Tobias previously had married Jerome's sister without giving him a woman in return. He thus not only violated the woman's stepfather's rights but also the rights of her senior clan brother. In a quarrel in the Social Club Jerome publicised a number of grievances towards Tobias. He stressed that Tobias was mischievous and implied that he did not deserve support from a wide range of people (including members of Tobias' clan, because he had allegedly killed his own brother).

Jasmine's husband, a man in his thirties, had to deal with an adulterer nearly twice his age. On the one hand, Tobias' seniority demanded the deceived husband to pay him due respect. On the other hand, the elder man had transgressed his rights as Jasmine's proper husband. The situation was an embarrassing one and one that did not occur under the gerontocratic system of the past when their roles vis-à-vis each other used to be reversed (Hart 1954: 257-8; Hart & Pilling 1960: 80). When Andrew Munuluka found his wife and Tobias together in the latter's hut, he asked for compensation. Tobias refused to pay the money. The payment of compensation by an offender is a conventional way of getting matters even and, therewith, sealing off a conflict (cf. Pilling 1958).

Tobias waved the threats of the cuckold away. He told me that the fight he had had with Jasmine's husband and the resulting scar on his forehead did not scare him off. Tobias underlined his words with the performance of a few songs, composed by his ancestors, emphasing his fearlessness: 'You don't know how to fight anybody, you coward (*aldukuni*)!/You, nobody can hit me on the head with a club [making the sign of a hand on the head]./You only big nose (*untetukuni*)!' Tobias explained it meant something like 'You put yourself tough man but [in fact you are] nothing'. Another song about a fight between two men also elaborated on this theme: 'You really tough, you hit me on the head with big bar./I put a scar on myself [that is, I am the really tough man, *arini*], I can hit you, I can hit you, hit you a bar on the head./I kill you!' The following nights Tobias performed these provocative songs in the Social Club within hearing distance of his opponents.[61] Within that week Jasmine's stepfather Isaac, backed up by his relatives, returned a sung and performed warning directed towards Tobias during a final mortuary ritual on Bathurst Island. The song texts had been composed by Korupu's son, Simon's and Bill's father, but Isaac had been the only one

who had remembered these. Tobias, who acted as a ritual worker, was symbolically paid with man-killing spears (another dreaming of the deceased, for instance flour, could have been likely chosen). The subject-matter of the accompanying song series was the fourfold killing at Matalau: (Minapini and Kantilla, talking about the people at Matalau, said) '"We got to get those men and make them die!"; I [Korupu] told them before, "Look out for those men [Minapini and Kantilla], watch out for their spears!"; 'Minapini and Kantilla [designated by their clan names] did not care when I said "*ninka*" ['nothing'] but they threw the spears.' As mentioned before, Isaac and his associates called out 'people from Matalau (*matalaula*)' and 'nothing (*ninka*)' when they were giving out money. In the past such calls or cries were employed in fights and battles to deter the opponents. I believe Tobias now clearly understood he was a man under sentence. He did not return to Pularumpi that night but went to Milikapiti.

The following day, however, he turned up in Pularumpi again. His worries in relation to the trouble, defined by him as 'woman problem', seemed to have increased and his plans to leave appeared to have become more definite. I discussed his dream, his complaints about eye-trouble, and the vison he had of a spirit of the dead. The vision of a spirit of the dead is generally seen as an amonition of death. In the morning of October the 24th, Tobias directly told me of his frightening experience. A cool breeze and noises at his window had awoken him, then he had seen the spirit that, as he said, 'was staring at me'. The trip to Bathurst Island with Jasmine and others had worsened his precarious situation. It convinced Tobias' already suspicious opponents that he was still 'going around' with Jasmine. Public opinion in Pularumpi had turned against Tobias.

In the story of the killings at Matalau, told so many times in the weeks and days before Tobias' violent death, Minapini was characterised negatively. Whatever was brought up against Minapini boiled down to Tobias. The raconteurs contrasted the remorseful character Kantilla favourably to the unrepentant killer Minapini, aggressive and unscrupulous. In the current situation it reflected the tellers' moral disapproval of Minapini's son in contrast to Kantilla's 'son' (SSS), Jasmine's deceived husband Andrew Munuluka.

In these days preceding his death, it was frequently put to Tobias that he had killed his own brother. The death of this elder brother had posed the problem for his clan brothers that they had been unable to retaliate without causing further loss of life to their own ranks. It meant, however, that Tobias (a clan brother) no longer could count on their support. We have seen that he was embroiled with his 'brother' Sam concerning the trouble in relation to Sam's wife. Tobias had demonstrated his defiance in continuing his adulterous relationship with Jasmine; things became even worse because he had started to claim her as his wife. He ran into conflict with her stepfather Isaac (a senior man of his own clan) and her senior clan brother Jerome, to whom he still owed a woman. Despite physical threats, public accusations, and warnings, Tobias persisted in his wrongdoing. In such a

rare case, when all means had failed to change the offender's behaviour, the ultimate punishment of a killing would likely occur without that person's close relatives intervening (see Hart & Pilling 1960: 83; Berndt & Berndt 1988: 344). The visit of Tobias' elder 'brother' Bruce Kerimerini might have been a mere coincidence. Bruce, however, was the senior clan member who would ideally have to give his consent to an eventual punishment of his younger 'brother'. Three senior Tiwi men independently told me in relation to a concrete case that they would take the alleged offender aside and individually ask him the point-blank question of what had happened. They described this as a procedure to establish the accuracy of the allegations.[62] Tobias informed me that he would go to Milikapiti but that his daughter there resisted his coming.

A conventional Tiwi way of avoiding an escalation of a conflict or to escape punishment is to move away to somewhere else. Tobias often talked about leaving, adding that he did not want trouble, but he lingered for the succeeding weeks in Pularumpi. The conflict revolved around Tobias' illicit affair with Jasmine. Even for Jeanette and I, it was not difficult to sense the increasing tension.

Jasmine's husband had gone to Bathurst Island in the afternoon. While her husband is away a woman's 'father' may be attributed some of the husband's responsibility of protecting her (cf. Goodale 1971: 100) in addition to, in Pilling's words, his 'right to act against whosoever may improperly try to secure his daughter' (1958: 44). If we accept the statement of Nancy that Tobias gave her and Jasmine a jar of beer then this must be seen as a serious provocation. Tiwi males hand beer, often 'take away' cans, to their lovers when they (want to) join together. During the time of my fieldwork, openly giving beer to a potential and unsanctioned lover (or even to her mother, the prospective mother-in-law) usually ended in a fight. More often than not these were ferocious fights and a wide range of weapons were taken up. In one case the gift of a single can of beer initiated trouble that went on for several months.

In sum, the data given above show a mounting crisis as a result of Tobias' continued infringements of what other people perceived as their rights. He did not terminate his affair with Jasmine, a woman promised and married to someone else, despite a fight with the deceived husband, physical threats by her stepfather, and cautions given in a ritual context. Grievances and smoldering old grudges against Tobias were aired in public. He neither accepted an offer to settle the matter with a restitution nor did he move away to prevent further escalation of the conflict. We might safely assume that his opponents gradually began to consider him an incorrigible wrongdoer.

In the last chapter I described the machinations of fate in Tobias' life and noted that he grieved for his late wife. It is acknowledged by Tiwi that persons who have lost a spouse, a close relative or another significant other may do harm to themselves. Tobias himself declared he was 'having a hard time'. I do not want to claim, however, that he was deliberately provoking

his own death. Tobias said he did not want troubles, at one stage he considered giving up his relationship with Jasmine, and his plans to leave were an ongoing concern. I would like to suggest he had few prospects left in life and, therefore, was prepared to take high risks (cf. Daly & Wilson 1988).

Hart (Hart & Pilling 1960: 81-3, passim) describes how before white intrusion Tiwi dealt with alleged adulterers in the majority of cases. If the accused had not run away, the (senior) man who was made a cuckold voiced his grievance against the offender at night in camp. Witnessed by a crowd of people, either in a large camp the next day or at another occasion, the deceived husband faced the man he accused of having seduced his wife in an open space. The accuser, his body painted with white clay and holding spears, performed an 'angry, loud harangue [that] went into minute detail, not only about the actual offence, but the whole life career of the defendant' (ibid.: 81). Following such a tirade he would throw spears at the latter. When the accused, after much dodging of spears, finally had been injured, the matter was settled. In exceptional cases where the accused refused to become a passive victim, a number of men would put him to death and his relatives withdrew their support or were restrained (ibid.: 80-3).

Sansom in his study of Aboriginal fringe dwellers in Darwin (1980) regards this Tiwi spear-throwing as a classic example of 'moral violence'. Features of the infliction of moral violence are a verbal proclamation of reasons, the presence of witnesses, complete surrender of the victim, and sanction by a group that takes responsibility as a whole. The execution of punitive acts of moral violence follows certain phases. First the executioner works by repetitive shouting of charges seeking consent from audience and victim. Then he or she may make several attacks, each again preceded by a proclamation of reasons. Finally this person restates the charges to have the consensus and commitment of those present reconfirmed. During the whole procedure there has to be general agreement about the defined nature of the staged punishment, and, therefore, the executioner monitors the audience for signs of disapproval. A failure to attune the performance to general acceptance may turn the punishment into an offence (Sansom 1980: chapter 4). As Sansom points out, 'What is guarded against is the allegation of individual culpability and, his representations accepted, the inflictor of moral violence is licensed by a collectivity which must then share wholly in the responsibility for his acts' (ibid.: 97). He distinguishes moral violence from interpersonal violence of varying degrees of seriousness, mainly indicated by the sort of weapons taken up. Fighting with the use of a lethal weapon such as a knife takes interpersonal violence to its utmost level of seriousness (ibid.: 105-6). In contrast to moral violence condoned by a group, interpersonal violence is considered a 'business' restricted to the antagonists directly involved. A milder form of the physical expression of moral violence, recognised as another level by Sansom, is taking a beating (Tiwi say a 'good hiding'). It differs from the other level, the throwing of

spears as described above, in that it is not effected with a lethal weapon (ibid.: 102-7). Sansom states, 'moral violence is violence that belongs not to the order of interpersonal struggle but is owned by a collectivity' (ibid.: 106). It might also be called juridical violence.

The problem is that the distinction between interpersonal violence and moral violence is a mere typology that does not necessarily hold in all cases, let alone all Aboriginal societies. In the context of late twentieth-century Tiwi society, the execution of violence had increasingly been monopolised by the Australian nation-state. The Tiwi spear-throwing in cases of adultery with its possible fatalities could no longer be staged without the risk of intervention by white police (cf. Hart & Pilling 1960: 83). Even in the spear-throwing, termed a duel by Hart, the violence was interpersonal, although morally approved of by a group of people, in that personal grievances were acted upon (cf. Williams 1987: 94). The Western law robbed Tiwi of the possiblity of punishing a serious wrong by means of a spear-throwing 'duel' or a sneak attack.

The Tiwi institution of spear-throwing has ceased to exist, but not the right of the deceived husband to act with violence against the man who made him a cuckold. As we have seen, Jasmine's husband punished Tobias. This was not the end of the matter, however, because Tobias continued his affair with her and claimed her as his wife, which was a claim considered unjustified by her stepfather and others. Jasmine's stepfather was allowed to stop Tobias from taking her as his wife. Furthermore, Tobias' insistence on obtaining this woman of the Pandanus clan brought him into conflict with her clan brother Jerome, who had already married off a sister (MD) to him but had not received a woman in return. Therefore, Tobias violated the rules of reciprocity concerning the exchange of marriage partners between clans, a breach of a norm that sometimes led to a killing. Tiwi in addition could give licence to anyone, although with preference to the aggrieved persons, to kill a persistent wrongdoer. In other words, a culimination of wrongs might outlaw the wrongdoer.[63]

In short, this is a case that contains elements of both interpersonal *and* moral violence. In case a larger group assents to a punishment beforehand, it may no longer be considered solely the 'business' of the antagonists proper, as in ordinary fights, but instead of a wider group who share responsibility for the punishment eventually executed. Several individual grievances and grudges were united into one, so a wider range of people (to whom in turn a large number of people had their loyalities) became joint owners of this 'business'. Tobias must have realised the threat, judging from his worries. Public opinion had gradually turned against him. Tobias' position, as expressed in his song 'You can do nothing about it!/If I want she can be my wife', had become an isolated one.

The initial reactions to the killing of the people from Pularumpi indicate that the homicide was regarded as justified. Everyone knew about the trouble concerning the attempted wife-snatching and could read the signs

(Tobias used to take Jasmine into his hut); it did not need to be pointed out at this stage. Instead, it was stated that Tobias' father was a killer and, consequently, Tobias had been killed himself, as well as that Tobias had killed his elder brother (more or less in the same way). To put it slightly differently, a balance had been reached and, therewith, the trouble was finished as far as these people were concerned. The pinning of a 'spear' into the ground next to the corpse further indicated this. The proposal of a medical explanation of the cause of death might be seen as an accounting for the killing to a similar effect. No one was to blame.

The response to Tobias' violent death differed considerably from the reaction to a killing that occurred in Milikapiti in November 1989. Then a planeload of police had to be flown in from Darwin to prevent an outraged crowd of the victim's relatives and clan members from lynching the man who had stabbed his wife to death. In the present case it seemed as if people were trying to cover up for the killer. Tiwi inferred a fight had taken place. The man who closely inspected the area surrounding Tobias' hut later told me that he thought the victim had been caught up in a brawl.

The card players under a streetlight at a distance had recognised the raised voice of Isaac over the noise of barking and howling dogs. One card player, Alan Pamantari, had also identified the voice of Anna Wangiti, a woman of the Stone clan who lived in Sam's camp. Simon gave the following account to the local police constable who interrogated him the second night after this occurrence:

> I hear noise from that Old Camp just after I get to that card game; I heard men arguing and dogs barking. I think that because of the noise there was a fight there. I heard only one voice clear and that was Isaac. I just hear his voice; it was too far to understand what he say. The argument went for a long time. When I came home I look at the clock and it was 10 past 1; I could hear the argument until then.(Transcript of Proceedings, The Supreme Court of the Northern Territory, SCC No. 186 of 1988, p. 340.)

Isaac made contradictory statements to the police. The morning Tobias' body had been found he told the constable, 'When I got back to the camp I went straight to sleep. (...) I didn't wake up in the night. I didn't hear any noises or fighting last night.' But the following Monday in a second statement, this time to a police detective, he said, 'We were arguing' (ibid.: 402-3). Several participants in the card game told me that they assumed a fight had been going on. Significant are the length and loudness of the argument, for it points in the direction of the infliction of moral violence in its similarity in style with the 'angry, loud harangue' cited above.

Suggestive of the violence being moral violence are also the apparent passivity of the victim, his partial undressing, and the consent of local people, demonstrated among other ways by their putting forward of justifications and their reluctance to speak out. With regard to witnesses, besides the card players being made earwitnesses, we can only say for sure there was one but there might have been more. Tobias had a reputation as a

skilled fighter. Besides the little fractured knuckles of one hand, the post-mortem revealed no further evidence that there had been considerable physical fighting on Tobias' part. Sansom describes this feature of moral violence as follows, 'for the infliction to occur, the victim must first be totally awed into passivity. Not attempting to escape, not retaliating, not protesting with words, not assuming a posture that protects the body, the victim by comportment answers the demand that he consents to the infliction' (1980: 92). Earlier on I mentioned Tobias' shirt was lying aside and the upper part of his body uncovered. The contexts wherein he would have had pulled off his shirt at night were subjection to ritualised punishment or a tryst. In the two cases of ritual punishments I witnessed, men had to peel off their shirts before taking club beatings. In ordinary fights I observed, the opponents did not necessarily undo their shirts. As we will see, Nancy, Tobias' former lover, would turn the taking off of a shirt into a meaningful symbol in her performance as a 'widow' or *ambaru*, a ritual role depicting aggressiveness in a fight and sexual jealousy, in the mortuary rituals for Tobias. This innovative dance movement was adopted by Oscar Pamantari, a man who some people claimed to have seen coming with his shirt covered with blood from the Old Camp on the night of the killing, and his 'brother' Isaac Pamantari (FBS), Jasmine's stepfather.

What at first sight seemed to have been an ordinary fight that got out of hand or a drunken brawl might in fact have been an execution. In this society where spear-throwing as a means to deal publicly with a wrongdoer had been suppressed there remained only interpersonal violence. From roughly the 1920s until the beginning of the 1970s the approriate means to punish stubborn wrongdoers were 'poisonings' (actual poisoning or sorcery). A decrease in external intrusion in Aboriginal internal affairs resulting from a change in government policy towards Aborigines led to a cultural revival in northern Australia. Part of these developments was that among the Tiwi stabbings became a major way to execute capital punishment. As had been the case with 'poisonings', the executioners remained hidden and did not make themselves known (as follows from a number of cases) because taking another person's life was still regarded as an offense against the state and was acted upon by the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system accordingly. In the newly emerged pattern knives replaced the spears of olden times. The former pattern in the Tiwi institution of spear-throwing, moral violence proper, in modified form entered the realm of interpersonal violence. These people had to rely on outright killings as, to use a phrase of Daly and Wilson, 'the most drastic of conflict resolution techniques' (1988: 10).

The Tiwi institution of sneak attacks also disappeared and diffused in the succeeding patterns of 'poisonings' and stabbings. New conditions such as settlement life and a rapid natural population increase led to an enlargement of scale compared with the earlier semi-nomadic bush camps. This increased the likelihood of intra-community killings, whereas the sneak

attacks had been mostly extra-local affairs. Earlier I proposed that given the high population density and high relational density (McKnight 1986) of the townships, the use of alcohol served as a way of social distancing. In symbolic terms intoxication, without denying its physical effects on the body, created a permissiveness enabling engagement in love relationships and the raising of conflicts to be settled with violence. Brady and Palmer (1984) have clearly shown that for Aborigines in central Australia those kinds of conflicts, though alcohol-related, had underlying motivations that could not be attributed to the arbitrariness supposedly resulting from alcohol consumption. They found among other things that injuries inflicted by drunken fighters on others corresponded to the appropriate locations on the body designating their interrelationships. This being in accodance with the subscribed body symbolism indicates that they were not blind actors but were still dealing with others along culturally approved lines.

The people living in the Old Camp, except Simon who did not drink and participated in the card game, all claimed they had been drunk during the night of the killing. We have seen that sneak attackers pretended not to 'know' their victim in their anger to seek revenge for grieveous bodily harm or a death.[64] Acknowledgement of the bonds of kinship and friendship would make them feel 'sorry' for the intended victim, which would make the execution of violence impossible. As Myers points out for the Pintubi Aborigines of the Western Desert, 'drunkenness may provide [an] excuse for violence: ignorance of the identity of the other. Given this view of accountability, one can understand the threats to get revenge "any time, when I am drunk"' (1986: 119). Tobias had been fatally stabbed in the chest, a clue that with regard to Tiwi body symbolism nevertheless indicates a possible identity of the killer. But I hasten to say that it is one of the most effective places to stab someone to death.[65] It must be noted that all people in the Old Camp were what in Australian juridical language is termed 'traditionally oriented'. The painful chest or breast points towards a relationship with the deceased of a 'mother' and 'mother's brother' or the other way round of a 'child' [female speaking] or 'sister's child' (the people heard yelling had these relationships with Tobias). After a death has occurred, Tiwi people move away from the place where a person died because that location becomes taboo (*pukamani*). It might have been a mere coincidence that on the night of the killing Isaac shifted from his hut, three steps from where Tobias' dead body was laying, to a building further away.

Although the people from Pularumpi at this stage seemed to consider Tobias' violent death a justified homicide, it did become an offense for the deceased's children from the other Tiwi townships. Simon, following in his grandfather Korupu's footsteps, became the elder who enacted the conventional role of a peace-maker (*pongkini*). He attempted to organise an inquest. The question of who was guilty of the killing was a complicated one, for the answer was not necessarily limited to the actual killers (see also

Elkin 1964: 119-21; Maddock 1988). Later on I will come back to these issues when I discuss these people's attempts to gain redress. Analytically the redressive phase is the most important in a social drama, according to Turner, because it is in this phase 'that both pragmatic techniques and symbolic action reach their fullest expression'. He notes that redress 'furnishes a distanced replication and critique of the events leading up to and composing "crisis". This replication may be in the rational idiom of a judicial process, or in the metaphorical and symbolic idiom of a ritual process, depending on the nature and the severity of the crisis' (1974: 41). We will see that the mortuary rituals for Tobias gave ample room for this.

I now turn to a brief reconstruction of what happened the morning after the killing, before my wife and I came to the scene. Early in the morning, Kevin Wangiti usually went to Sam Kerimerini's camp to have a cup of tea and breakfast there. Now his attention, so he told me, was caught by barking dogs surrounding a human body lying under the mango tree. Kevin signalled to the other neighbour who was having tea at his new campfire. The man, Isaac Pamantari, indicated he did not know about what Kevin was making a fuss about: 'What for? I don't know', he said to Kevin, and further ignored him.[66] Kevin went nearer. To another man who was coming with a loader behind Tobias' hut he made signs that there was something wrong. The man on the loader, Lester Calley, drove to his house to tell his wife Maud about it, because Tobias was her 'father' (FFMSS). Kevin saw that Tobias' body was covered with blood. He decided to warn the Aboriginal health worker, Alan Pamantari, who was on call at that time. Kevin told Alan that there was something wrong with Tobias. Together they came back with the ambulance to have a look.

Alan, following his account to me now, soon found out that Tobias must have been dead for some time. Blood had come from his mouth. There were flies crawling out of his mouth to which his body did not react. The time was about 6 a.m. Alan made a telephone call to the local police constable because the health workers had to report unnatural or sudden deaths.

Alan, I believe, was well aware of the increasing tension between Tobias and a number of other people. Tobias personally had informed him of his dream. The previous night, when people were playing cards in front of his house, Alan too had heard the raised voices of Isaac and Anna in the Old Camp. Perhaps because he feared an outburst of violence, and that his relatives were involved, he opted for a diagnosis saying that maybe some blood vessel had burst in the dead man's head as a result of his high blood pressure. Later that morning, Alan told my wife Jeanette and I that he *hoped* that the post-mortem would establish that Tobias' death was caused by high blood pressure, a burst blood vessel, or a stroke.

In the meantime, Maud, who had been informed by her husband and by Alan as well, had set out to enlighten Tobias' close relatives. She had sent her daughter Claudia to her parents, Sam and Nancy, in the Old Camp to

bring them the message. Sam was Tobias' elder 'brother'. The girl caught Sam, her grandfather, in his sleep. She woke him up and told him, according to Nancy, that his younger 'brother' was dead. 'You stupid', she would have said to Sam, for he was considered 'deaf', that is, he could not understand in both senses of the word (cf. Venbrux & Deenen 1989) and he was supposed to protect his brother. Nancy informed Tobias' daughter Laura. Maud herself made her round through the village to tell the newly bereaved about Tobias' death. She, a health worker too, clung to Alan's story as to the cause of the man's death. Maud also came to our house early that morning.

Much of the situation was uncertain, of course, and people were looking for explanations and ways to deal with the violent death. A medical explanation, a burst blood vessel or a stroke for example, was seen as a possibility. Another possibility, according to the president of the community council, was that the victim had been caught up in a drunken brawl. And there were several possibilities that the killing had been a retaliation for other slayings. But most of these killings had occurred more than a decade earlier. There had been trouble recently. As mentioned earlier, the dead man (whose name had become taboo) and the event of the killing were referred to with the expression 'under the mango tree'. It was not unusual for a dead person to be referred to in that way (cf. Hart 1931: 285). The man who repeatedly had been made a cuckold by the victim had the mango tree as his dreaming, and a dance, identifying his patrilineage, in which he was eating mangoes. Added to the possibilities mentioned was the possibility of a 'tribal punishment', as one woman called it (see below). Three senior people regarded an iron bar as the possible weapon.

4.3 Finding out

In the afternoon people's attention was diverted by the football match. It seemed as if that morning nothing unusual had taken place. The audience - men, women and children - looked at the match on the local oval. No one said a word about Tobias' violent death. Jerome paid us a visit before he went to the Social Club. He named Walter and Jim Kerimerini (the eldest sons of Tobias' 'brothers' Sam and Bruce), and myself, as the 'sons' of the dead man who had to kill his 'murderer' in the same way. Everyone could do it, he said, but actually we had to do it.

After sunset, people at the Social Club wailed. Appropriate times to wail were just after sunset and before dawn. The drinkers at the Social Club were reminded by Tobias' absence that he had always been there. People began to acknowledge the loss. The time just after sunset and the drinking set the context in which people could express their grief. Alan went around to pick up his children. He had been busy the whole day, he said, 'but now I think, that fellow that died, I shall miss him'. And with tears in his eyes he said, 'He was a good man.' Tobias had supported Alan in the council election

three days earlier. Tobias was of the opinion that a 'full-blood' Aboriginal person had to be president of the community. Gladys Pamantari, another health worker, said that card players had heard loud noises, a 'big fight', in the Old Camp the night before. No one went to look, she added. The health workers hoped something else would come out of the post-mortem. Tobias' daughters had asked for help to ask around who had done it, but nobody had given them help; they wanted a meeting but none of those present had opened their mouths. She, once again, emphasised that she hoped that a cause of death other than homicide would be revealed by the autopsy. Gladys then said, 'Seems punishment, tribal punishment, three times beaten on the back... It's the Law, old Law. We thought maybe it fades away, culture, but it still goes on. We hoped it might [have] stopped.' The health workers would try to find out who had done it, she stated. Maud Calley had gone to the health clinic to get some medicine. She had a string of pandanus leaves around her head, the traditional remedy for a headache. Her family was bereaved, she lived close to the Old Camp, and soon the mourners would come from the beer canteen to her home, all drunken and in a violent mood.

The next day, a Sunday, we went to Milikapiti for a postfuneral ritual. On arrival people gave their condolences to Isaac and Sam because they had lost a 'son' (female speaking) and a 'brother' respectively. The Pamantari group, closely related to the deceased in Milikapiti, played an important role in this ceremony. Isaac, Bill, Jerome, Theodore, Simon, and other members of the Pamantari patrilineage attended the final mortuary rituals. Tobias' bereaved daughters were present in order to gain wider support. At the end of the dancing ceremony (*yoi*) Simon, the 'boss' of this ritual, at their request, tried to organise an inquest. He placed himself in the ceremonial ring (*milimika*). None of the audience, however, came forward to participate in the meeting (*nemara*). Tobias' daughters only uttered their grievances. Just as in Pularumpi, nobody was prepared here to talk in public, although gossip had it that Sam killed his 'brother' Tobias. With regard to the lack of response, and in accordance with Tobias' dream, Simon asked 'What shall we do?'

Finding out who had killed Tobias would soon become a matter for the white police, as the results of the post-mortem were known. Consequently, Tiwi had to redefine the situation. What Sansom states for Aboriginal fringe dwellers in Darwin also applies to Tiwi:

> [I]n the world of mobs there are no structurally determinate consequences of homicide. While either a death compassed by sorcery or one materially inflicted can lead to counter-killing or to exacting of a price for blood, the ways in which these possible consequences will be prosecuted depends on particularities. These relate to the political status of the victim, the worth accorded to the alleged slayer by his associates, and the current state of inter-group relationships (1980: 262-3).

We have seen that the political status of the victim had diminished, 'the worth accorded to the alleged slayer' might be inferred from people's

reluctance to speak out, and 'the state of inter-group relations' was such that the aggrieved (the dead man's children) found little support the first two days following the killing, but this could change in time. The intervention of police, homicide being an offence to the state, would take the matter out of the hands of the Tiwi. Some Tiwi people, Simon Pamantari, for instance, opted to 'let police have it'. Simon, a man with conflicting loyalities, told me he feared a series of killings and counter-killings in raids between the townships if the police would not intervene; the cost in lives would be too high. It was better to have white police take one person away. The people Tiwi told me they suspected of having killed Tobias were all more or less closely related to the majority of people in Pularumpi. This web of interrelationships made them in a certain sense untouchable in this locality for, as Berndt points out, 'any accusation against or by one person inevitably involves others' (1965: 202-3). Those who were held responsible for the killing had wide kin support in the township, dominated by one patrilineal descent group and the three matriclans involved (Stone, Pandanus and Mosquito clan, and perhaps the Fire clan in addition). Direct accusations in such a situation of interdependencies equalled social suicide. Tobias' relatives in the other townships took his violent death as an offence. Adjustments had to be made so the offender could eventually be punished. The police here can be viewed as an external agency that could pick out the killer(s), taking fingerprints and using a computer, Tiwi assumed, without Tiwi people having to discredit themselves in making accusations that would possibly make an affront to many more other people (who considered the homicide justified) related to the accused. The police in late twentieth-century Tiwi society have the function of punishing an offender from outside comparable with the former sneak attackers. For sneak attackers and white police alike the same term, *mantatawi* or 'dangerous persons', is used.

4.4 'The message that it is murder'

On Monday morning a number of people were sitting under a tree near the place where the mail could be collected. Someone called out. Nancy Kerimerini ran away and signed me to come with her. 'It's Mike', she said, 'He has gone crank. Maybe he got the message, that it is murder.' This meant Tobias' death would become police business that had to be dealt with by the local people concerned. That Tobias had been killed could no longer be denied; 'the message' erased the possibility of a medical explanation.

Mike walked fast in a stumbling way. Nancy's son, the police tracker, seemed to be in a mist. After a while he started talking. He had a quick private conversation with his mother. Tobias had died at eleven o'clock on Friday night. The police had received the news from Darwin. Mike was on his way to the Old Camp. He had two large bandages stuck on his bare chest. On his head he wore a black cap on which in white letters had been written R.I.P.

In Sam's camp he walked back and forth. Then he filled his cup with water at the tap and entered the verandah where Tobias' daughter Laura and her white sailor friend Karl were sitting. He told them something. Karl's head flushed red, and he blinked his eyes repeatedly. Laura moved away. The sailor got his stainless steel skinning knife out of his hut and started sharpening it.

In the meantime, Sam and Nancy took turns at card playing. Maud had also come to the camp. She took over the cards while Nancy went to inform Sam, who had walked away, of what their son had learned at the police station. Nancy returned. We both saw Isaac had gone looking around in the bushes behind the Old Camp. When I asked her what he was doing she first was silent and then she said, 'Maybe he is collecting wood'. Such a thing appeared rather odd to me in the green shrub at that time of the day.

Nancy decided we would go back to the shop. She said to her husband that she wanted to tell Pamela, her 'sister', something. When we walked under the mango trees we saw Isaac reappearing beside Tobias' hut looking swiftly in all directions. The police van came driving into the Old Camp. Nancy whispered that Isaac's hand had been swollen. I replied he should go to the clinic to have the health workers have a look at it.

Tobias' daughters had gone wild in Milikapiti, according to Simon when I visited him in his hut. 'They went mad there', he said, 'They won't have the funeral here but in Milikapiti. If the funeral would be here in Pularumpi they from Milikapiti won't come to the funeral. They will not be at the funeral.' The location of Tobias' grave would be at issue in several meetings of the bereaved.

Tobias' children and their close relatives had a meeting on the verandah of Maud's house. The local police had declared that no one was allowed in the Old Camp. In the meeting Tobias' daughter Heather was the most vocal. She argued that the coffin had to be followed by another coffin. Heather wanted to avenge her father's death. 'That fucking police can't do fucking anything', she said, 'We must kill that person who killed him, not let him go.' Then she seemed to have changed her mind, 'or let him in jail forever'. They kept guessing who could have been the 'murderer'. They wondered whose voice or voices the card players had heard and why they did not speak out. Two daughters were especially annoyed that the people of Pularumpi would not tell a thing. They decided they had to do it themselves, 'kill that fucking murderer'.

Their anger was directed towards the local police, the local people's lack of interest in other people's business, and the liberal policy of local authorities towards fights. Heather voiced it as follows,

> That fucking police here, can't do fucking anything. In big cities, Melbourne, Sydney, if there is someone killed they have the murderer the next day. Here in this little community they can't find him.' She continued, 'That bloody card players! If there is a fight in Milikapiti everyone is going to look there, kids and everyone. Here is somebody killed and they didn't even take a look. On that

> club there should be restriction of six can [cans of beer]. When there is a fight on the club no beer for two sessions or so. They should close that club.

'We must do it our own way', the vocal daughters kept saying, 'Do it the same way!'

Walter Kerimerini summarised what was at issue: it would have to be decided if the matter would be given to 'whitefella law' or 'the Law'. Elderly people, relatives from Nguiu, would come to help them with that decision. He said that maybe Tobias' 'full uncle', Isaac Pamantari, had killed him. Tobias' children agreed that the funeral would take place at Milikapiti.

4.5 Police intervention

Two police detectives from Darwin's Criminal Investigations Branch (CIB) and the coroner arrived by special plane. They went into the Old Camp with the two local policemen. The heavy rain and lightning forced them to leave, leaving one police officer behind to keep an eye on the site, which was cordoned off again.

When shortly afterwards a truck with elderly people from Nguiu drove into the community, police intervention was a *fait accompli*. The men - including Tobias' 'brothers' Steven Tampajani and Bruce Kerimerini, and his 'father' Jack Munuluka - came for a meeting with the bereaved children. They overruled the earlier decision of the latter that the funeral would be in Milikapiti. It was now decided that Tobias would be buried next to his father Minapini at a location near Paru, opposite Nguiu, at the Melville Island side of the Apsley Strait. In subsequent meetings the burial place that was decided on was changed under pressure of the respective localised groupings: from Pularumpi to Milikapiti, and from Milikapiti to a place not far from Nguiu.

Around 4.15 p.m. the police had organised a line search in the Old Camp in order to find 'the murder weapon'. Local people participated in this search. A crowd watched the search from the other side of the road. One of the detectives walked around in the Old Camp with Isaac, who was pointing at Tobias' hut. He was sent off to the police station. Then the detective came to the people who were watching. Before he could ask his question of whether they had been playing cards, Roger and Bill said they did know anything about it. Other people did not respond either. Tobias' daughters became angry. 'Tell him, fucking cowards, tell him!', they yelled. The lingering tension increased. The daughters kept screaming at the other people. They blamed the people from Pularumpi for refusing to talk and urged them 'to give him [the killer] a hiding'. The search for the weapon in the Old Camp was without the wanted result. Tobias had been stabbed to death, according to the police. Mike had already learned this early in the morning. The iron bar could no longer be considered the possible weapon. Those who participated in the search were told to look for a large knife. The described type of knife was in day-to-day use by the local people,

mainly in eating and hunting, but at this point all the large knives seemed to have disappeared from the Old Camp. Only a very small knife with a broken blade had been found near Karl's hut.

As the local people were reluctant to speak, the detectives ordered the police tracker to bring Tiwi people one by one to the police station, where they would be interrogated. The detectives, who did not keep a record of this, estimated that they saw between forty and fifty people in the course of two days. Some people who were held as 'possible suspects' were interrogated more than one time. On Tuesday afternoon there was only one man left on the list of 'possible suspects'. The detectives were under the impression that this man, Kevin Wangiti, was telling them lies. After he located a knife at the beach and 'confessed' he had killed Tobias, he was charged with the murder. Kevin said to me about the repetitive and lengthy interrogations, 'They didn't believe me. Kept telling, telling...pushing..."tell truth". You can't win.' For the detectives the reliability of Kevin's 'confession' rested on the assumption that the locations of the stab wounds on Tobias' body, pointed out by him with a pen, could only be known to the murderer. These 'facts', however, were already common knowledge in the community, but the police didn't know this.[67]

The Aboriginal police tracker, Mike Kerimerini, had told the details the day before in the Social Club, after the line search in the Old Camp. Although Tobias' daughters from Milikapiti and Nguiu at first were angry that the beer canteen was opened, they nevertheless followed their elder sister Laura to the Social Club. There they were drinking beer with Karl, Sam, Nancy, Jeanette and I. Jasmine sat within earshot with her back turned to the family group; Jerome was also sitting nearby.

Nancy's son Mike entered the club wearing his police hat. He came to where we were sitting and told in great detail about the wounds that had been revealed by the post-mortem report. He showed how Tobias had been fatally stabbed in his chest. A knife had pierced his windpipe, said Mike; that was where the blood he had vomited came from. With his hands he pointed out the size of the 'Rambo-knife', the assumed 'murder weapon', the police were looking for. A salient detail was that Mike also told about a stab wound in Tobias' back. Kevin confessed to this 'fact' that had been made public knowledge by Mike. The results of the autopsy, however, showed no such wound.

4.6 A mourning session

Just after sunset, the wailing resumed. About 7.15 p.m. Nancy performed a mourning song, walking back and forward, in front of Maud's house: 'When me, I did not care before when I was young and Minapini came. I did not care when one man said "nothing" (*ninka*) but Minapini got his spears and killed us.' She took the side of her father's brothers and referred to the

killings at Matalau by Tobias' father. Jerome, who came from the Social Club, called out to Jeanette and I. He signalled he had seen and heard something. 'It wasn't the old man. It wasn't Isaac who killed the old man.' Nancy confirmed what Jerome said. It had been a young man who lived in the Old Camp. 'Tomorrow we do it!' he told us, 'We kill that man, the person who killed the old man.' He wanted me to return his present, a weapon, a sharp fighting stick (club) he had made himself. 'Tomorrow we'll do it', he added.

Tobias' bereaved family stayed in Maud's house, as people were not allowed in the Old Camp. Inside the house, Sam was in deep grief. Heather had her hand in his; she was quiet, her head hung down. Sam cried. Laura, sitting bare-breasted, wailed loudly while covering her eyes with a piece of cloth. Jerome said he knew someone had been put in police custody. The next day he would kill that man. He said he would dress himself as a woman and wear a petticoat because he was the dead man's brother-in-law. In other words, he would replace his late sister Kate and retaliate for her husband's death. At the time (the morning Tobias' body had been found) we did not do it, he said, but now we will do it.

In grief and anger, this group from Pularumpi stressed the ties that bound them to Tobias' bereaved children, the aggrieved party. Maud's husband Lester, for instance, bent himself over Sam and Tobias' daughters. He hit himself with a large knife on his head. Heather then took the knife away and put it behind her. Therewith she accepted his sorrow and their mutual relationship. Nancy sang once again. She said she was singing for the children that they would take care of Sam when they would do it that night: 'They did it once, they might do it again.' Then she wailed. 'He was my lover', Nancy said. Sam straightened up. He made the sign of a baby with his hands in front of him. 'My little brother, why he?', he said to me. Sam sat down and wailed.

This mourning session shows the 'juggling of identities' (Rose 1992: 153-64) that took place in adjustment to the altered situation. (Jerome had first assured his 'father' Isaac 'didn't do it'.) In their grief they recognised their shared identities with the deceased and his children. Heather from Milikapiti, who had spoken up to her father when he just before his death wanted to flee to her, acted as the spokesperson of the bereaved children. She could do so because she had less strong ties in the local community than her elder sister Laura. She also was a more vocal person like her late father (thus her nickname was The Noise). Her anger was directed outward, to other people, and perhaps distracted people's attention from her own refusal to help her father when he was in serious trouble. The deceased children's close relatives in Pularumpi now stressed an identification with the bereaved. Jerome proposed a retaliation replacing his sister, the bereaved children's mother. The attention of the bereaved children was directed to Sam, Tobias' 'brother' and therefore the children's 'father'. Nancy presented him as their surviving father who was in danger of being killed as

well. This senior 'father' had to be protected by them. She herself stressed she had been Tobias' lover and therewith was the children's mother in more than one sense. In other words, Jerome, Sam and Nancy, who had been in conflict with Tobias, now stressed how closely they identified with him. Instead of being Tobias' disgruntled brother-in-law, a husband deceived by him, and an ex-lover who had been jealous and maltreated, these people emphasised shared bereavement. They placed themselves in the position of Tobias' children's parents to be protected and followed instead of being suspect and prosecuted. In unison with these children they propagated retaliation, rendering their moral support to them. The bereaved children readily accepted the strengthening of their ranks, and deep grief temporarily replaced their anger.

The next day the community was still in a state of tension. The people who belonged to Sam's camp negotiated the story they would tell the police. To put it briefly, they had come home drunken from the beer canteen and that was all they knew. After a person had been interrogated at the police station, the person discussed with the others what had been said.

After sunset the wailing resumed again. Heather went around in the township screaming continuously, 'We do it the same way!'. Her threats illustrated that her anger had not disminished; that the case was in the hands of the police did not satisfy her.

At 10 p.m. Kevin Wangiti was officially arrested. The police came to Maud Calley, the health worker, to get his medicine for his high blood pressure. From then on, Tiwi people from Pularumpi expressed that they did not believe he actually had committed the crime he had been charged with. That night Martha Arapi, Minapini's only surviving wife, dreamt that Kevin had not killed Tobias. When Tobias' corpse was to be released the next day he would be buried next to his father. In the following chapter I will describe the funeral rituals.

5 THE FUNERAL RITUALS

5.1 Introduction

Ordinary life in Pularumpi came to a standstill on November 3, 1988. The shop, the school, and the council offices were closed. The people from Pularumpi and Milikapiti went to Pawularitarra by truck (see Map 1). To get to Pawularritara the people from Nguiu just had to cross the Apsley Strait with their dinghies. They would, together with most of Tobias' children, accompany the coffin that had been flown into Nguiu on Bathurst Island.

Tobias would be buried at Pawularitarra on Melville Island next to Minapini. Pawularitarra was an abandoned bush camp where Tiwi people lived until the early 1970s. The remaining tin shacks and an empty well indicated the site. Minapini's grave was located at the other end of an open space behind the former camp. Minapini had refused a Roman Catholic funeral and, therefore, he had been buried out in the bush. In the late twentieth century Catholic funerals were taken for granted, but the 'pagan' mortuary rituals no longer were suppressed. The Tiwi burial ceremonies were interspersed with Catholic ceremonial conducted by a priest. For Tobias a funeral mass would be said in the open air at Nguiu and then the coffin would be brought to Pawularitarra, where Tiwi would proceed with their burial ceremonies. Tobias' burial drew hundreds of people. This was not only due to his seniority and his widespread social networks in all three townships, but also to the type of his death.

In this chapter I first discuss some aspects of Tiwi mortuary behaviour necessary to understand the ritual drama, and present a general account of Tiwi burial ceremonies in the late twentieth century. Then I describe the burial ceremonies for Tobias and a number of cleansing rituals held not long after the burial.[68]

5.2 Mortuary practices

The mortuary rituals or *pukamani* are at the core of Tiwi cultural life, as death is, according to Hart, 'the natural phenomenon around which the Tiwi had woven their most elaborate web of ritual' (Hart & Pilling 1960: 90).[69] In the late twentieth century the mortuary rituals and the seasonal yam ritual or *kulama* are the two major rites of passage (cf. Van Gennep 1960) still performed. Whereas involvement in the latter has become a concern of a

limited group of people, almost everyone participates in the mortuary rituals at one time or another.

Pukamani

The concept of *pukamani* not only refers to the mortuary rituals in general but also to all that or who are subjected to behavioural restrictions or taboos.[70] Anyone closely related to and anything closely associated with a recently deceased person (objects, persons, dogs, places, and names) become *pukamani*. To put it differently, whatever might be subject to the attention of the new spirit of the dead will be *pukamani*.

Cleansing rituals with water and smoke, and ritual whipping, serve to drive out *pukamani* and chase the spirits of the dead away. The personal belongings of the deceased were taboo and, therefore, these would be destroyed, buried or thrown in the sea. I was told nobody wanted these things because it hurt the survivors to be reminded too much of the deceased. When not directly put away after death, things like clothes, matresses and sheets later would sometimes be deliberately used as a focus in ritual when an emotionally compelling remembrance of the dead was desirable. The house formerly occupied by the deceased and items difficult to replace (such as cars, dinghies, VCRs, football trophies), however, would be ritually cleansed with smoke. After cleansing had taken place, people might move into the house again or it might not be reoccupied for a considerable time, if ever. It all would very much depend on the emotions and needs of the people concerned.

Before the cleansing rite, houses and yards would be taboo (only accessible to the ritual workers who gather the personal belongings of the deceased) and often marked as such (e.g., with a piece of red fabric). In case of a fatal motor vehicle accident, the spot where the accident had occurred would become taboo and the road would be blocked off. A special 'open 'em up' ceremony (*ampuraprapununga*) or cleansing rite with the erection of a mortuary pole would have to be performed to have the road available again for traffic. After the death of a senior person, sometimes the road or pathway to that person's 'country', a district with an ancestral grave, would be temporarily closed. After the death of the most senior (important) person of a country, a relatively rare occurance, the country can be ritually cleansed.[71]

Whether other places than the house occupied by the deceased and the place of death would have to be ritually cleansed varied depending on the social position of the deceased, the type of death, and, of course, people's sentiments and needs.[72] The need to ritually cleanse a number of places would be prevalent after unexpected and sudden deaths, the most shocking of all. After these abrupt deaths I was frequently told that the spirit of the dead kept roaming around and bothering the living. The places frequented by these persons when alive then would be cleansed either in Tiwi fashion or by the Catholic deacon through blessings with holy water. Following the death of a boy caused by box jellyfish, so I was told, his classmates did not

dare to go into the classroom again before the room had been ritually cleansed with smoke.

The Tiwi names and the English name (except the introduced and established family names) of the deceased and all words in the language closely resembling these names in sound as well as all Aboriginal names given by the deceased became taboo (cf. Hart 1931), not directly after death as one might assume but after the grave mound had been made. Namesakes of the deceased adopted another name. I observed in a number of cases that a close relative of the deceased called out the Aboriginal names of the dead person at the freshly made grave, whereafter no one was allowed to use them, 'not even when drunken', until the name taboo had been released. Sometimes these names were already distributed beforehand to patrilineal (actual and classificatory) descendants of the deceased. In one case a widower also mentioned the 'white man's name' (*intanga muruntani*) of his deceased wife to be taboo. When someone accidentally mentioned a tabooed name that person would strike themselves, whereafter it would be accepted it had not been done deliberately. Such a name should certainly not be used within hearing of close relatives of the deceased, this with regard to their feelings. One night, for instance, Jerome came to me upset because my 'brother' Mike had mentioned Tobias' name in the Social Club. He threatened to spear him. The Aboriginal names seemed to remain taboo for a longer period of time than the English ones. It depended on the close relatives of the deceased how long it would take to have the taboo on a name lifted. The lifting of a name taboo often coincided with the transmittal of the name to a patrilineal (actual and classificatory) descendant of the deceased, but could not happen before all the mortuary rituals had been accomplished. Then the consent of consanguines would be needed either to put the name in use again, to be mentioned in songs after the death of a paternal half-sibling of a different clan instead of that person's name, or to donate the name to a child or newborn baby, often but not always during the *kulama* ceremony. The right to name persons is vested in the mother's husband (cf. Hart 1931; Hart & Pilling 1960) and might be extended to patrilineal relatives of ascending generations of the person to be named (F, FZ, FF, FFZ), both actual and classificatory. These persons might donate the often poetic Tiwi names of their own during their lifetime, give new names or names of the dead.

I found that besides the names of the deceased, also their voices on tape and photographs and videotapes depicting them would become *pukamani*. Cassette tapes would be erased or put away, and videotapes and photographs of the deceased would not be shown for considerable time. People reacted to the voices on tape and images in the photos as if they were dealing with a living person (greeting, talking, touching, and so forth). The word for spirit, *imanka*, may also be translated as shadow, reflection, echo, and photograph (cf. Osborne 1974). This spirit, 'just like a shadow, we got to see moving', can leave the body and return to it but when definitely divorced from the physical body turns into a spirit of the dead (either a

male *mopaditi* or female *mopadringa*). Photos of the deceased were sometimes used in the mortuary rituals. During the funeral 'children' (male speaking) of the deceased (their 'father' or 'father's sister') performed first looking at the photograph and concluded with an intense expression of grief. Most of the time the picture was held upside down. This use of photographs in mortuary ritual appeared to be a recent innovation.

As Goodale points out, who has to live up to rigid behavioural restrictions after a death and for how long depends on: '(1) the degree of relationship to the deceased modified by the amount of actual contact; (2) relative age among those whose relationship to the deceased is otherwise equal; and (3) absolute age' (1971: 262). Close kin who had daily contacts with the deceased become *pukamani* immediately. The eldest of every category of people (mortuary kinship, see below) related to the deceased also directly become *pukamani*, while this status first applies to younger people at the start of the postfuneral rituals. The very young and very old do not have to follow the behavioural restrictions (ibid.).

A strict observance of *pukamani* rules related to death, according to my informants, demanded of the person in question: remaining undressed except for a skirt or loincloth but applying bodily paint and wearing ritual ornaments; not washing oneself; abstaining from sexual intercourse; refraining from the consumption of food foraged by oneself; not coming near the shop; not playing cards; not using one's own hands in eating, drinking, and smoking; not carrying one's own food and drink; not leaving one's camp at night; restricting one's movements to an area not previously frequented by the deceased, with the exemption of mortuary ritual occasions (and then special precautions are taken, such as cleansing rituals and a ritual driving-out of the spirits of the dead).

In the late twentieth century a strict observance of all these rules and taboos in relation to being *pukamani* was rather exceptional and appeared to be incompatible with the contemporary way of life of most Tiwi people. People who were fed and given drink by others, had their bodies elaborately painted with ochres, and were wearing a number of ritual ornaments were said to be 'really *pukamani*'. Cleansing rituals with smoke and water partially released people from the state of *pukamani*, only to be adopted during the mortuary rituals. To whatever degree and length of time people actually followed the ideal rules of being *pukamani* seemed to have become an expression of grief. It was considered wrong, however, for a widow or widower to have intercourse before the mortuary rituals had been accomplished. My Tiwi friends praised those bereaved people who strictly adhered to the *pukamani* rules outside the context of the mortuary rituals.

Death

Deaths were often anticipated, both by the dying and their close relatives. Amonitions of death included unsuccessful hunting trips in the country of the dying, remarkable sights or the sounds of birds and animals often representing a dreaming of the dying, a feeling in the appropriate parts of

the body (e.g., leg, shoulder, breasts) indicating the relationship with the person who will die, visions of spirits of the dead just after sunset or at dawn in the neighbourhood of the very ill, visions of spirits of the dead and the sound of a whistle in the vicinity of (nearly) fatal motor vehicle accidents, and other liminal occurrences such as a black bitumen road-like band against a clear sky and rain falling while the sun was shining.

People gave light, digestible bush and sea foods - such as mangrove worms, stingray meat, and a mash of prepared cycad fruits - to very ill persons to help them to regain their strength. When this failed, the sick often indicated they no longer wished to eat and demanded close relatives come. People did all they could to put the very sick or dying at ease, giving their attention and holding, massaging and refreshing the body of the person in question. Devout Catholics would join together at the deathbed and say rosaries. Moreover, many people came to visit the dying, and they wailed and hit themselves. An elderly woman who was about to die commented, 'They all came to say lovely sorry for me'. Sometimes relatives from the other townships would camp in the vicinity to await the death. Now and than it happened that a person thought to be dying recovered or that a message was misinterpreted to be the bad news of a death. Humorous tales about such occurrences abounded but the wailing was always taken as an expression of sympathy no matter how long the bewailed person would continue to live as it was also appropriate to wail for persons who were very sick or who would leave for a long time.

The very ill made it clear to the people present when their time had come, saying they 'might pass away soon', they only wished some water to drink, and gave some directions with regard to the mortuary rituals (e.g., the place of burial) if they had not already had done so before. At the deathbed of an old man I was told the spirits of his dead father and spouses had come to take him with them. People monitored the weakening of his pulse going up along his arm. He had not completely ceased breathing when people began wailing and hitting themselves. I then was told that his spirit had gone. A friend of the deceased performed a mourning song telling the new spirit to move away and to follow his father to the latter's burial place.

Emotions of the bystanders at death were very intense. The bereaved called out things like 'Why did you leave me alone?', 'I want my baby back!' and, 'How beautiful you were!', or used the kinship term of address in their wailing. People would hit themselves but were restrained from doing harm by others; they tried to injure those parts of the body indicating their relationship with the deceased. In the loud wailing the immediate family of the deceased faced the dead person, others 'said sorry', wailing and hitting themselves, in front of the immediate family of the deceased (cf. Goodale 1971: 249). The wailers might also weave onomatopoeia of a dreaming they shared with the deceased (e.g., the sound of a dingo, pelican, pig or jungle fowl) in their expressions of grief. The focused emotional expressions had a strong relational quality, identifying the mourners.

The loud wailings of the people present at the death would alarm other people in the township. These people would come to the place of death to view the deceased for the last time and they would wail as well. Soon after the death the dead body would be moved, laid in state, and wrapped in a sheet.[73] Herewith a first step in separating the deceased physically from the world of the living was taken. The spirit (*imanka*) was said to be carried around by a bird called *tutjunga* (*ampuramara'leiangolomei* was translated for me as '*imanka* taken by bird'). The death would be announced in the other townships by a telephone call. The message, without mentioning the name of the deceased, was then brought to the bereaved relatives. People embraced each other and cried loudly. Very close relatives of the deceased would come directly and with considerable speed. On arrival they hit themselves, wailed, and performed mourning songs. The others would come the next day for the funeral.

The mortuary rituals can be seen as a gradual initiation of the spirit of the deceased into the world of the dead. In many cultures this transition is conceived of as a journey. In Tiwi death rituals not only the corpse is dislocated, but also the spirit of the dead is directed from the world of the living (*tiwi*) to places connected with the world of the dead (*mopadruwi*). The patrilineal emphasis, as in spiritual conception, is particularly strong in the mortuary rituals because the spirits of the dead are supposed to move to the burial places of the 'fathers' and 'father's fathers' and their dreaming places (the seat of the mythical ancestress of the father's and father's sister's clan). Simon Pamantari, one of my key informants, spontaneously contrasted Tiwi eschatology to the teachings of the Catholic missionaries:

He said in the past (*palingari*) people 'didn't know soul go to heaven, they only go to own country.' They reckoned, 'Oh, soul go nowhere, just go where my father grave, my grandfather grave, that's all, because no missionary that time.'

When the missionaries came they said, 'You soul go to heaven, that's your home too.' Some people reckoned, 'No! I got home where my father.' Others agreed, 'I don't think so, my father there. I gotta go along my father, stay there, grandfather, like that. I don't think we go heaven.' The missionaries then said, 'Yes, you go there, you soul go there. You body stay here and you soul go there, spirit.' My informant commented, 'But you spirit, *imanka*, stay somewhere, country, you know.' He continued, 'And people, they didn't believe much properly. We can't see anybody going up. No, we know, we just go there, spirit go to our father, our grandfather.' The missionaries replied, 'No, you go up. Sometime you go...you bad, you go hell.' Slides were shown at night depicting a large road with many people leading to a fire, the hell. 'This lot of people go where that fire, big mob tucker [plenty food] there, big mob money there, big mob beer there.' It made people think that was a good place. The missionaries then showed a slide on which there was another road, 'See that small road, that's good people go there.' Only one person went along that road. The people

commented, 'Hey everybody go there and one man been turn around.' 'Yes, because that mob doesn't like it there, because no much money there, no tucker there, no pub there...therefore everybody go like this, devil-country. Yes, hell, silly alright!'

My informant stressed that when he died he would go, that is his spirit or shadow would walk, to his country, the burial places of his 'fathers' and 'grandfathers', or as Tiwi say, where those people 'live'. He related how he had seen a spirit of the dead. He seemed rather indifferent to the 'good news' of Christianity, 'Oh, soul might go to heaven but when I die my spirit go to country I have there, that way.'

Quite a number of Tiwi people, however, have accepted the Catholic creed and try, in accordance with contemporary mission policy, to merge it with Tiwi cosmology and mortuary practices. At the end of the 1980s nearly all Tiwi were at least nominal Catholics and sometimes mourning songs referred to the deceased going to heaven. The patrilineal emphasis in Tiwi mortuary ritual implies the dreamings of the deceased and the ancestral burial places often being a central theme and focus. The cosmological purpose of the ritual drama is to guide the new spirit of the dead from the world of the living to the world of the dead. To understand the ritual drama we need to know more about the various ritual roles and some organisational aspects.

Mortuary kinship terminology

Shortly after a death a special mortuary kinship terminology will be used for different categories of relatives of the deceased. These terms indicate their relationship to the deceased and specific roles in the ritual drama. Table 1 lists the mortuary kinship terms I arrived at in discussions with key informants. These terms are more or less in accordance with those recorded by Brandl (1971) and Grau (1983). Goodale (1971) first noted the existence of this special terminology. Brandl, following Needham in part, calls the mortuary kinship terms 'bereavement status-terms' (1971: 233). Bereavement status might be accepted as an approriate expression indeed, for every mortuary kinship term denotes a specific position of being bereaved of a relative (comparable with widow, widower and orphan in the English language) that in addition guides these people's behaviour. I would like to comment that, as we will see, a bereavement status may encompass a gender-relationship irrespective of the sex of the persons involved. A number of bereavement statuses are connected with a specific body symbolism. I now turn to a discussion of the bereavement status and the according roles in the ritual drama.

Unantawi (male *unantani*, female *unantaka*) is a generic term for the *unantawi* (*pulanga*), *mamurapi*, *kerimirika*, and *kiakiei*, to be distinguished from the more specific mortuary kinship terms *unantawi* (*pulanga*) and *unantawi* (*pularti*).

TABLE 1

MORTUARY KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

Mortuary kinship terms	One called the deceased:	Kinship notation: (actual and classificatory)
mamurapi (turah)	*ringani*	F, MZH, MH
	tinganinga	FZ
	timinti	HMB, SWB, (Z)HF
	timintinga	ZSW,SW,(Z)HM,MBW
kerimerika	*amini*	FF, MF, FMB, FZS
	amoa	FM, FFZ, MFZ, FZD
kiakiei	*mawanyini*	SS, BDS,maDS,ZSS,MBS
	mawana	SD,BDD,maDD,ZSD,MBD
unantawi (pulanga)	*murauni*	S, maS
	muraninga	D, maS
mutuni	*ingkalipini*	FS of different clan
	inkalipa	FD of different clan
impala	*amprinua*	(B)WM, feDHZ
	pinyua	DH,feZDH,MZH other clan
	pinyiwini	WMB, maZDH
mamurapi (pularti)	*naringa*	M, MZ, F(B)W
	ilimani	MB
	nirinua (E than ego)	maDH, (B)WF, FZH
unantawi (pularti)	*mworinga*	ZD, feD
	mworti	ZS, feS
	nirinua (Y than ego)	maDH, WF, FZH
paputawi	*impunga*	EZ
	impwoka	YZ
	juwuni	EB
	juwani	YB
	maningoa	MM(Z)
	angimani	MMB, much EB
	intamiliti	feDS, ZDS
	intamilinga	feDD, ZDD
	umpurutrini	SWF, DHF
	umpuruteri	SWM, DHM
ambaruwi	*injimini*	ZH, WB, HB
	injimunga	BW, WZ, HZ
	apunai	H
	apunajina	Z

Z = sister; B= brother; M = mother; F = father; D = daughter; S = son; W = wife; H = husband. E = Elder; Y = younger. fe = female speaking; ma = male speaking.

The patrilineal *unantawi* consist of the following categories of people: *mamurapi* (*turah*), *kerimerika*, *kiakiei*, and *unantawi* (*pulanga*). These categories of bereaved people may perform separately, jointly or as one body. Brandl states that when acting together they dance with (imaginary) spears and are designated as 'the *turaghawila*, or war-making, revenge party' (1971: 443). My informants said they represented not only sneak attackers (*kwampi*) but also spirit children (*pupaputuwi*). What we have here is a double symbolism of death and rebirth, a transition mediated by a metaphorical killing.

The actions of the 'spirit children' need some explanation. In Tiwi cosmology the father (or FZ, FF, FFZ) of a future child is supposed to dream about little spirits who spear him in his sleep. This spiritual conception indicates his wife will give birth to a child, the spirit child he dreamt about. In the ritual drama the symbolic role of the spirit children spearing the 'father' is mostly enacted by the deceased's paternal 'children'. These performers, sometimes using actual spears, conclude their dance with a stylised movement denoting the spearing while they exclaim 'turah'. One informant decribed this as 'their second birth in dancing'.

The dance may consist of a few stylised movements but at times it may also be elaborated in a kind of narrative dance. The dance might depict historical events in which sneak attackers figured. In chapter 3 I mentioned the killings at Matalau as the subject matter of such a dance. Spencer in his description of a Tiwi mortuary ritual provides us with another example:

> [T]he father (...) after dancing round furiously, fell down flat on the ground (...). Four other men came up with short spears and, after peering about from side to side, in a stealthy way, crept up quietly to where the old man was supposed to be asleep and, suddenly, speared him through the chest. He writhed about on the ground while all the men and women danced round. This of course was supposed to represent the killing of a native by enemies who had crept on him unawares, while he slept.' (1914: 237)

The killing depicted in this dance closely resembles an actual case of a killing by sneak attackers which occurred before Spencer visited the islands. According to a 'grandson' of the victim (BSS), four men from Malau on Bathurst Island had come to Rangini on Melville Island. Covered by the darkness of the night they snuck up to the camp of a man named Pupliangamiri. This man was then speared through his chest while he was asleep. The re-enactment of the sneak attack seems to have been merged with the conventional imagery of a spiritual conception, the father being speared by spirit children while he slept, and hence short spears (made for children as toys) were used in the dance.

As I mentioned before, the re-enactment of historical events as perceived by the performers, events they could relate to, would be employed to give meaning to a current situation. It might be that their representation of sneak attackers helped the bereaved relatives, in their appropriate positions to avenge a death, to express their anger following the death of a patrilineal relative. The symbolic killing in the dances of the

patrilineal *unantawi* enabled on the symbolic level, as an image of an abrupt and radical breaking of ties, the ritual separation of the deceased from the living. I will discuss the theme of symbolic killing in the next chapter. It is interesting to see how Tiwi dealt with an actual killing here ('reality') merged with the conventional theme of killing ('fiction') in the rituals. In this way possibilities could be explored. The mortuary rituals following Tobias' violent death enabled reflections on his life, his social and cosmological identities, and the killing. Table 2 lists the various roles that play a part in the ritual drama.[74] The order of presentation is consistent with the Pularumpi-biased sequence in a full-scale dance and song ceremony (*yoi*).

TABLE 2

Mortuary kinship dances

The *mamurapi (turah)* dance with (imaginary or actual) spears representing both spirit children and sneak attackers. These paternal 'children' end their dance by thrusting the 'spear' into their 'victim' (imaginary or represented by a 'father') lying down onto the earth.

The *kerimerika* perform the same dance but hold one hand on their heart. These paternal 'grandparents' (given the system of alternating generations), like the 'fathers' and 'father's sisters', may have a dream about spirit children who are supposed to spear them in their heart. They are said to feel a pain in their heart when they have this dream indicating a 'baby is coming up'. At the same time, they represent the deceased's 'grandchildren' as spirit children.

The *kiakiei* dance as if they are carrying the deceased as a little child on their shoulders (a common Tiwi practice). I was told that when a child in a ritual context was lifted up and carried on the shoulders it was made 'important' (this had happened to a man after he had become an orphan as a little child; he later became one of the principal ceremonial leaders). Another metaphor employed, mainly in song language, in relation to this category of people was the carrying of a bundle of spears on their shoulders that represented their 'grandchildren'.

The *unantawi (pulanga)* symbolically hold their male genitals in their dance and conclude this dance with 'cutting off' their penis (*tika*) with a swift movement of one hand. With this they represent as the deceased's 'fathers' their loss because they 'made' the deceased. In another dance version the performer puts a finger on the lymph nodes in his groin (*pulanga*) on each side. I was told that these glands swell up when one's legs are infected and that the *unantawi* (*pulanga*) feel in this part of the body when something is wrong with one of their 'children'. The stretched forefinger here stands for a one-sided barbed spear (*tunkwaliti*), an allusion to a symbolic killing.

The *mutuni* dance holding their cheek(s), here representing the deceased in Tiwi body symbolism. They symbolically loose one side of their face. In song language it is also expressed that the cheek is hurt or injured (or other metaphors might be employed, such as a boat turned on its side) and that the lost side of the face or healing can be found at the burial place of a paternal 'grandparent' the performers and the deceased have in common. The location happens to be a destination of the spirit of the dead. I sometimes heard a *mutuni* exclaim after a death had occurred, 'I follow you soon!' for the focal burial places are the destinations of the spirits of the *mutuni* too. In mourning songs the names of *mutuni*, paternal 'half-siblings', are used instead of the names of the deceased. The performers smash themselves with their hand on one side of their face. In wailing they often do the same or beat with the side of their face against a solid object. The *mutuni* are recognisable in having their cheeks painted up, one side of the face painted in another colour than the other, or having only one side of the face painted up.

The *impala*. If this category of personnel is available they may enact a dance called *impala* in which they move green boughs over their shoulders. This dance represents a bird moving its wings. At the same time it stands for the relationship between sons-in-law and mothers-in-law who refer to each other by pointing to the shoulder (*amprinua* being the reciprocal kinship term). In song language other metaphors can be used, such as the wings of a plane, the branches of a tree, or a rope. The relationship, like between brothers and sisters, is one of avoidance. Therefore, they usually remain at a distance from the deceased. The son-in-law has to provide his mother-in-law with goods, food, and services. A son-in-law who is an able singer will compose mourning songs for his dead mother-in-law. These songs are conceived of as a gift. The people in this category may have their shoulders painted. A painful shoulder is said to be an indication that something is wrong with the other in this particular relationship.

The *mamurapi (pularti)* dance while holding a fist on their lips and end the dance by turning their head backwards. They are supposed to be 'drinking milk' from the deceased's breasts. In the accompanying songs they 'cry' for the milk that has been lost, dried up, or spilled. They call out for *pularti*, breasts, *palimpalim*, milk or breast-feed, and for *mangalingari*, milk rushing up in the mother's breasts.

The *unantawi (pularti)* hold their breasts while dancing. The symbolism of nurturing is an inversion of the symbolism belonging to the previous category of bereaved. People in this category in contrast to 'drinking milk' are supposed to be 'giving milk'. But again death results in a breaking of ties and, therefore, the lack of breast-milk is for these

performers the main theme of song and dance. Labor pains and childbirth represent an alternative theme. I believe this re-enactment of the transition from the world of the spirit children to the world of the living is used as a metaphor for the deceased's transition from the world of the living to the world of the spirits of the dead. It must be noted that the sex of the performers (e.g., a 'mother's brother') is irrelevant here but that the relationship between social categories of people is of importance instead. People in this bereavement status may paint their breasts, identifying their specific relationship with the deceased. The breast(s) are the part of the body, my informants said, where they feel something is going on with a maternal 'child'.

The *paputawi* hold their leg or legs in their dance. The accompanying songs are about their injured leg or an amputated leg, a metaphor for the loss of a maternal 'sibling'. The body symbolism is derived from a myth in which a man named Purukupali fought with his younger maternal brother Tapara after the latter had seduced Purukupali's wife and her son had died as a result of neglect. Tapara offered to bring the child back to life but Purukupali refused the offer and said that because his son had died all people (*tiwi*) had to die. In the fight Tapara injured Purukupali's leg with a forked throwing club. The people in the *paputawi* bereavement status paint two bands with white clay on their lower legs. Their dance usually begins and ends with hitting their lower leg. A feeling in the leg indicates something is happening to a maternal 'sibling'.

The *ambaruwi* constitute a category of bereaved people consisting of, on the one hand, the actual widow or widower (*ambaru*), and on the other hand, the other *ambaruwi* from which the 'workers' who had to carry out practical and ritual tasks will be selected. The *ambaruwi* of the second type dance in a fighting pose, pretending to fight off the spirits of the dead. They separate the world of the living from the world of the dead. The conventional themes of their performances are aggressiveness and sexual jealousy. They play a jealousy role. Their mission in the ritual drama is to awaken the sexual jealousy (*tulura*) of the spirits of their dead 'relations' (*aramipi*), so these spirits will engage in sexual liaisons with the recently deceased. Sexual jealousy is one of the basic themes of Tiwi life. In their role enactments the ritual workers show their sexual attractiveness towards the deceased and aggression towards their relations - dead or alive - who compete with them for the attention of the deceased. The religious purpose is to prepare the world of the dead for the coming of the deceased: a category of spirits of the dead are influenced, suggesting they will seduce the yet unsettled spirit of the recently deceased. Their sexual attractiveness towards the deceased is among other things stressed in dance movements denoting the making of advances and sexual intercourse. For example, in one dance they 'show the knees' (*impula*) and their fronts by bending and opening their legs

and making pelvic movements. The traditional attribute of the workers in the mortuary rituals is a piece of wood (*aruwala*), used in fights to dodge spears. Another feature of their role is the aggression of the shark (*tatuwali*) shown in the shark dance performed by ritual workers at the conclusion of the dance ceremony. It is all about sexual jealousy and the resulting fights, as in ordinary life, but is mainly directed towards the spirits of the dead. Therefore, brothers-in-law of the male deceased in their songs may jokingly exchange insults with the latter, as they do in daily life. They also emphasise eventually outstanding claims on women resulting from the exchange of marriage partners between their respective clans (*keramili*). These exchange relations parallel the exchange relations in the performance of ritual tasks (underlying these exchanges are clan exogamy and incest taboos in the first instance and *pukamani* taboos in the second). Often these *ambaruwi* were spouses of *mutuni* and *paputawi*. They could begin and end their dance by hitting their partner on the cheek or kicking on the leg respectively. Spouses or lovers of the *ambaruwi* may dance making pushing movements with their hands, representing waves bursting on the beach, a dance that has a sexual connotation for Tiwi. During the whole ceremony the second type of *ambaruwi* may dance in the background in a fighting pose, supporting their spouses, friends, and relatives.

The actual widow or widower has a slightly different style in dancing compared to the other *ambaruwi* and do not express aggressiveness. The bereaved spouse comes last. In songs and dance this person displays the features of sexual intercourse with the deceased when both were alive. The widow or widower may undress, and will ask while employing the voice of the dead partner why they no longer can have sex.

In the ritual drama, given its purpose to direct the spirit of the dead from the world of the living to the world of the dead, the people of the different bereavement status all play a role in the remembrance and dissolution of a particular metaphorical relationship with the deceased. 'Sibling' units - which are more elemental in Aboriginal kinship systems than the wife-husband relationship (cf. Williams 1981) - men and women alike, can be seen to enact male *and* female gender roles. It all depends on the symbolic relationship of a certain category of bereaved people, people of the same bereavement status, to the deceased.[75] Matrilineal relatives, such as a mother and mother's brother, for example, enact the role of the deceased's mother, breast-feeding or giving birth to the deceased. ('Female speaking' and 'male speaking' in the kinship terminology also do not refer to the sex of the speaker but to the gender aspect of the relationship, for instance, the mother's brother and mother, both siblings of the same matriclan, relate to ego in the same way and employ 'female speaking' terms for ego.) The point I am driving at is that relationships between categories of people and the deceased are emphasised. Tobias Arapi gave explanatory expressions for his

actual and classificatory relationships to different clans such as 'call me mother' and 'call me father'. Spiritual and physical conception, child care, pregnancy and childbirth, nurturing and being nurtured, and sexuality as well as body symbolism focus on a particular relationship with the deceased. In this way the deceased and the bereaved are symbolically reconstituted.

Besides the bereavement status, the performers stress cosmological relationships in ritual calls of personal and place names, a focus on ancestral burial and dreaming places. They denote their identities or put forward identity claims in patrilineal ancestor-choreographed and/or dreaming dances. These dances might be performed apart from the mortuary kinship dances or in combination, one after the other or merged.

Organisation of the mortuary rituals

The roles the various categories of bereaved people play in the ritual drama have been described in Table 2. Furthermore, a number of ritual tasks have to be carried out and decisions must be made.

First, some people had to be asked to perform a number of burial tasks. These people preferably belonged to the category of *ambaruwi* (see Table 1) with the exemption of the deceased's actual spouse. They were asked by close relatives of the deceased fairly soon after the death. Only the 'workers' were allowed to handle and dispose of the corpse. After the burial they would be paid in cash by the people who asked them to carry out the tasks. Close relatives of the deceased gave them cans of beer in the Social Club.[76]

Second, the place of burial had to be decided on. The deceased's will, if known, was usually respected. Most of the people were buried in the Catholic graveyards but some were buried at ancestral burial places in the bush or at the beach. The place where someone was to be buried was significant, for the patrilineal descendants could claim the area as their country and for them it would be a focal point in mortuary ritual.[77] In addition, a time for the funeral had to be set. The rule of thumb was that when people died before 11 a.m. they would be buried the same day; otherwise, if outside agencies did not intervene, they would be buried the next day.

Third, someone would have to be the 'boss' of a mortuary ritual. Preferably, the chief funeral director would be a male of the *unantawi* (*pulanga*) bereavement status. He was assisted by *mutuni*. A male *mutuni* could take the lead when no *unantani* (*pulanga*) was available. In late twentieth-century Tiwi society, the group of people with sufficient knowledge and skills to perform the role of boss was rather limited. Consequently, it would happen that a somewhat more distantly related boss in the appropriate categories had to be asked to direct the postfuneral rituals. Such a 'hired' boss would expect returns in time (e.g., in one case a daughter of the deceased offered herself as a wife in exchange for the senior man concerned organising a grand final ritual for her dead father). For a major postfuneral ritual in 1989, a *muntuni* delegated his role as boss to a classificatory son, his second in line, so this man of the *kerimerika*

bereavement status could obtain experience in directing the ritual and take over as a ceremonial leader after the former's death.

Fourth, it had to be decided what kind and how many special cleansing rituals would have to be performed following the death. Here also the services of 'workers' belonging to the category of *ambaruwi* were needed, and at the conclusion of each ritual payments to them in cash had to be made, followed by the donation of beer in the social club. I will discuss these rituals in section 5.4.

Finally, if, where, and when postfuneral rituals would be held was another matter to be decided on. Every *unantani* (*pulanga*) or *mutuni* could organise his own postfuneral rituals for the deceased. Thus for one deceased more than one complete series of postfuneral rituals could be held, and grand final rituals (called *iloti*) for one person on different locations. I never saw or heard of major postfuneral rituals, besides the immediate postburial ceremonies, being conducted in the main Catholic cemeteries (although a mortuary pole could be placed at the grave afterwards). When there was no 'bush' grave available, another grave containing clothes and personal belongings of the deceased could be made, or there would be no grave at all. Sometimes there was a joint final ritual for two or three dead persons. The number of poles erected at a final ritual ranged from a single sapling, painted white, or a borrowed old pole, to twenty or so elaborately carved poles with striking polychrome, painted in geometrical designs especially for the one occasion. The postfuneral rituals began with a series of smaller rituals. The initial rite, which could also be headed by male or female matrilineal bereaved kin (cf. Brandl 1971: 482), was the so-called 'axe-giving'. In this rite the main ritual workers who had to provide the mortuary poles were appointed, and an agreement was reached about the number of poles. I found no evidence that Tiwi mortuary rituals varied depending on the sex of the deceased. Variation, however, depended on such factors as age (or better, seniority) and social position of the deceased (cf. Van Gennep 1960: 141). Another relevant factor was the type of death (Hertz 1960: 80); untimely and violent deaths were followed by relatively more elaborate rituals which drew a larger attendance. Furthermore, the intentions of the bereaved kin, their numerical strength and ability to pay, support of others and outstanding obligations, and the personalities, skills and creativity of personnel and the like were important. Prestigeous mortuary rituals were memorable occasions, memorable because of the quality of the ritual performances, especially when original, the number of poles and subsequent payments, and the attraction of a large attendance.

Involved in the decision-making were patrilineal and matrilineal bereaved kin; actual kinship took precedence over classificatory kinship, patrilineal bereaved kin over matrilineal bereaved kin, and seniority over people of lower 'age'-grades and lesser influence. When necessary the actual bereaved spouse(s) had a decisive voice. The widower or widow(s), and *mutuni*, were always consulted regarding all major decisions (see also Brandl 1971: 481). Payments to the *ambaruwi*, except the bereaved spouse,

had to be made by the patrilineal *untantawi* (see above) and the *mutuni*, and eventually could be made by bereaved matrilineal kin if they liked to. The widow or widower or else the *mamurapi* (*turah*) supervised the collection and distribution of the outgoing payments. Balanced reciprocity was the rule in those payments, and older debts when in a reversed ritual role could be paid off in an unrelated mortuary ritual as well.

The day of burial could hardly be planned. Bereaved kin employed or at school in the townships got a day off for a funeral. The smaller rituals were held during a break at noon, after working hours, or on a Saturday. The final mortuary rituals were mostly scheduled on weekends, following a payday, on a Saturday or Sunday, or both.

For analytical purposes I will make a distinction between the funeral rituals (the double burial ceremony and cleansing rituals) and the postfuneral rituals. The postfuneral rituals consist of a series of smaller rituals and are concluded with an elaborate ritual called *iloti*. These postfuneral rituals will be further discussed in chapter 8. Here I present a general account of the burial ceremonies mainly based on my observations of two dozen Tiwi burials over a period of fourteen months in 1988 and 1989, as well as comments of Tiwi people on those burials.

Burial ceremonies

As mentioned before, the dead body will be laid in state and wrapped in a sheet (sometimes the limbs were tied together). The ritual workers will measure the corpse and start to make a coffin (in Nguiu and Milikapiti the local council provided the coffin). When the deceased had to be buried the next day close relatives stayed with the corpse. They performed mourning songs. A fire was kept burning or electric light left on to keep the spirits of the dead away. Some people also put a mirror beside them. Several close relatives splashed their bodies with white clay.

Early in the morning the ritual workers would place the corpse on a bedframe in an open space in camp. This open space would become a dancing ground and was cleared by the ritual workers. The close relatives, painted up and wearing ritual ornaments, sat in the vicinity of the corpse waiting for the people to come for the funeral. A few male ritual workers went to the graveyard and dug the grave.

New arrivals went to the dead body. They faced it, wailed and hit themselves (frequently at those parts of the body showing the relationship). Those people who were more closely related to the bereaved directly went to them and did the same. Thus the wailing, 'saying sorry', was directed either to the dead person or the bereaved. If necessary the 'boss' of the ceremony gave directions and told those present where the person in question would be buried. Two types of mourning songs could be performed throughout and outside the ceremonies, not connected with their structure in particular. These were *ambaru*-songs by the *ambaruwi* (including the actual widow or widower) and *mamanakuni*-songs by other (matrilineal and patrilineal) relatives such as *unantawi*, *mutuni*, and

mamurapi (see Table 1). When sufficient people were present a dance and song ceremony (*yoi*) could start. I was told that it was not a proper ceremony because there was still a 'dead body around'.

The people from Pularumpi said only the patrilineal *unantawi* (see above), *mutuni*, and *ambaruwi* were allowed to dance in the burial ceremonies. The *paputawi*, for instance, were considered 'too close'. This often led to conflicts with people from the other townships who were of different opinion (cf. Grau 1983: 116-7). They did not, however, in all cases practice what they preached. Sometimes an elder from Pularumpi went 'crook' when the dancing in other townships commenced in what the Pularumpians conceived of as the wrong order. According to them the *mamurapi* (*turah*) had to start with the dancing and not the *unantawi* (*pulanga*). The 'right' order then was: *mamurapi* (*turah*), eventually *kerimerika* and *kiakiei*, *unantawi* (*pulanga*), *mutuni*, and *ambaruwi* (see Table 1 and.2). The actual widow or widower always came last.

In late twentieth-century Tiwi society only a limited group of (mainly elderly) people were able to compose the ceremonial songs.[78] Consequently, these people often had to perform songs for other categories of bereaved as well. The procedure in most mortuary ritual dancing events was as follows: After the men had indicated the beginning of the ceremony with a long call, a man at the edge of the ceremonial ring (*milimika*) would perform a song. The other men picked up the words of the song and repeated these. Time was beaten with a hand against the buttocks, sticks, or on a piece of corrugated iron.[79] Then the singer or the category of people he had composed the song for would dance. The dance ended with a particular dance movement and all the men called *weya* ('finished'). Men and women danced separately in the dance groups of a bereavement status. The dancers might be supported by befriended or related *ambaruwi* dancing at the edge of the ceremonial ground. The dances of the central performers were their dreaming dances passed down along patrilines, patrilineal ancestor-choreographed dances, and (more rarely) their own creations or innovations. These dances also included mortuary kinship dances to which people also could give their own individual twists and employ particular styles, choreographies and dance movements belonging to their patrilineage in a broad sense. Dances of both types were often performed one after the other or combined. At the conclusion of their dancing, these performers often wailed near the deceased (falling down next to the corpse or at the grave mound) or a substitute (e.g., the mortuary poles in the final ritual). How many dancers and dance groups there were of a particular bereavement status depended on the personnel available and willing to dance.[80] Sometimes a category of bereaved was not represented as a result of a lack of people. The end of the ritual dance event would be marked with a long (mosquito or honey bee) call again.

A Catholic mass would be said either before the ceremony around the corpse or following it. Some ritual workers would bring the coffin. The climax in wailing came when they put the dead body in it and nailed the lid

on the coffin. The bereaved had to be torn away from the coffin. Before the coffin was closed the surviving spouse had physical contact with the deceased for the last time. The widower would place himself on the body of his wife. I also witnessed a widow stepping in the coffin of her deceased husband. She bent her knees and lifted her skirts above his head and wiped them over his face.[81] I was told that in the past one of the wives used to do that. People all gathered close together around the coffin and wailed loudly as mourning songs were performed.

Then the coffin was put in the back of a truck and, accompanied by the close family and a few ritual workers, driven to the graveyard. The arrival of the deceased at the burial place would be announced to spirits of the dead. A bereaved daughter, for instance, called out, 'Daddy, mummy is coming!' The other people followed the truck with the coffin to the graveyard. People who had missed an earlier funeral went to other grave mounds, cried for the previously deceased and eventually performed a mourning song. Others sat down at the graves of close relatives, cleared them, and cried. A priest would bless the newly made open grave. While the ritual workers scraped and dug out a last bit of sand from the hole, the immediate family often embraced the coffin. Again, they had to be torn away. From the moment the coffin was lowered into the grave until the grave mound had been made there was another intense wailing. During the interim, people hanging over into the grave frequently had to be taken away. Several times I saw family members drop into the grave, sometimes trying to dig out the deceased. A widower jumped into the grave and burned his pubic hair with a lighter.[82] People facing the grave wailed, and wailed, and, of course, mourning songs were performed. Kinship terms of address (e.g., *ilimaneiii!* for *ilimani*, 'mother's brother') were called out in wailing and sometimes the sounds of a dreaming (e.g., a pig's grunt) were reproduced. Personal belongings could be buried with the deceased. When the grave mound had been made, a sapling was placed on each end of the grave. At one end also came a wooden cross, painted white, with the name of the deceased written on it; the name in writing was not taboo.

Goodale writes that in 1954 the use of a coffin and flowers in one burial were introduced as innovations (1971: 250). When there were (artificial) flowers in Tiwi burials at the end of the 1980s, these had been given by outsiders. But things that in one way or another commemorated the deceased, a football shirt for instance, could be placed on top of the grave mound. I already mentioned the use of photographs depicting the deceased as a recent innovation. Another innovation was the occasional wearing of unicoloured fabrics by the bereaved to distinguish dancing groups (like yellow, white, red, and blue) and black skirts for 'widows'. This innovation orginated in Nguiu, where fabrics were available from a silk-screen printing workshop called Tiwi Design. Clothing and fabric materials with multicoloured prints designed by Tiwi people were very popular all over the islands and frequently were used in mortuary rituals for loincloths, skirts, and ritual payments. One group of female dancers even had red skirts

with a buffalo print, representing their patrilineal group performing the buffalo dance.

When the grave mound had been made, both the mound and a dancing ground surrounding it were cleared of all hard objects and raked over by the ritual workers. A dance and song ceremony (*yoi*) similar to the one around the corpse was then performed. At the conclusion of their particular dance performance the bereaved dropped onto the mound and wailed. Some people covered their faces with dirt from the grave. Young men ended their last dance by making a somersault over the grave mound and bouncing on their backs. People would also hit themselves with any object available and had to be restrained by other, or closer, bereaved.[83] Within the framework of the mortuary rituals the mourners, with other people at hand to prevent them from doing serious harm to themselves, could safely express their grief.

The surviving spouse danced last. This person had had the most intimate contact with the deceased and, therefore, could be expected to be haunted by the spirit of the dead. The focus on the performer's genitalia and on intercourse as experienced, and enjoyed, when both were alive seemed to be designed in this role to give satisfaction to the deceased's spirit, to bemoan the loss of the couple's physical intimacy, and as a breaking of ties.

A widow sat with her legs pulled up on the grave mound, described to me as a common position for intercourse, while she performed a mourning song. The surrounders wailed. Two elderly female informants complained to me that the mainly younger people were crying too early; they ought, like it always happened in the past, listen 'what they talk together when husband and wife'. A male elder formulated it in a similar way: one should 'first listen then cry', he said. Tiwi rituals were also times of 'ceremonial truce' (Goodale 1971: 188) or, as Turner would have it, times for redress (1974: 41). The widower who let his dead wife tell him to save some of his pubic hair for his second wife commemorated that his wife was always jealous when he had other wives or lovers and frequently fought them until these women left him. Although the ritual performances fit in with established conventions there was room for the performers' personal experiences to become ritualised (cf. Karpferer 1986). The distancing in the mourning songs put as a dialogue with the deceased enabled a reflection on personal experiences. I will cite one other example to illustrate this point. A woman had been raped while her husband, a heavy drinker, was said to be 'going around' with other women. When he was drunk he accused her of having provoked the rape herself. Thereafter, she committed suicide. During the burial ceremony the husband, among others, was accused by his wife's close relatives of being responsible for her death. His mother defended him, singing: 'When my son drank beer he didn't give her a hard time!' The widower's mourning song, however, consisted of an admission of guilt: (Dead woman saying) 'Why you went to see all those women?/You mucked [up] your own wife./Just go, and show your cock to every woman!'

On two occasions I saw a widower drop his loincloth (*naga*) at his wife's grave, a gesture associated with having sex. One widower and ceremonial leader had worn his loincloth, later left behind on his wife's grave, in every ritual he attended for more than a decade. It might seem a trivial gesture but I do not believe the widower, who I came to know well, saw it in that way: the loincloth reminded him and others of all those previous occasions and was charged with emotions. The loincloth left on the grave in addition might be seen as a symbol of death, implying the breaking up of a relationship, like the deceased's clothes that would be buried or destroyed. I recorded a number of cases of men burning the clothes of their wives or lovers who either had left them or were considered unfaithful, and was told it meant they were 'finished' with the person concerned.[84] According to local belief the destruction of someone's clothes equalled killing that person (cf. Johnson 1980), hence the exchange of clothes was taken as a sign of friendship and trust. In pre-contact times Tiwi went naked, and bereaved spouses had to suffice with burning pubic hair. Goodale reports a case of a widower burning 'his wife's pubic hair as well as his own' while she was told 'that in the old days, the *ambaru* [widower or widow] used to copulate with the deceased in the grave' (1971: 268). Depilation, the cutting or burning off of body hair, marks a transition in many cultures. As with other ritual actions, its meaning depends on the context (cf. Morphy 1984). In Tiwi mortuary ritual the singed pubic hair symbolised the termination of the relationship between spouses. I was told that the 'new hair' would be 'for a new wife' or husband.[85] In 1990, a man sang in the yam ritual that he wanted to see the long pubic hair of a widow and to take her in the long grass (an euphemism for having sex with her). In the next chapter I will come back to the subject of Tiwi hair symbolism.

The subject matter of songs and dances identified a particular relationship or relationships with the deceased. A man, for instance, while making dance movements depicting him bereaved of his loincloth, sang an *ambaru*-song employing the voice of his deceased longtime lover saying that when she tore off his loincloth his erect penis slapped against her face. Herewith, he not only pointed out that the dead woman had been his lover and potential spouse but also that she was his paternal half-'sister'. In other words, the man had a double bereavement status, *ambaru* and *mutuni*, the latter status indicated by him being hit on one side of the face or cheek (see Table.2) and in his using this song text of a 'father' he and the dead woman had in common.

People were often moved by the performances of widows and widowers, whether the sight of a young, beautiful widow dancing or an elderly widower who, biting on a piece of cloth in grief and anger, created a new dance at the grave of the third wife he had lost. He composed a song mimicking his wife's voice stating that they could no longer join together, from then on he would have to go in the bushes alone and have sex with himself. Encircling the grave he staged a new dance depicting masturbation.

Following the last dance the widow or widower was given a ritual bath by one of the *paputawi* and had the whole body rubbed with white clay. This partially released the bereaved spouse from the *pukamani* taboos. Female informants told me that in the past the maternal 'brother' of the deceased (*putani*) who washed the widow could take her as his wife. They said that men 'straight away' after the burial took the widows with them for sex without waiting until the accomplishment of the postfuneral rituals and a final ritual bath lifting the taboos.

People wailed together at the grave mound. Friends and relatives of the bereaved went to them and 'said sorry' in Tiwi fashion. Some were shaking hands. The newly bereaved and recently bereaved following other deaths often gave support to each other. Finally, but not always, the survivors stepped or jumped over the grave mound. I was told it was done so the spirit of the dead would not follow them (see also Mountford 1958: 67). Some people said 'good-bye' (*nimpangi*) to the deceased. After the burial the family members often temporarily moved away from the township where they used to live with the deceased.

The innovations and original contributions in song and dance can make mortuary rituals memorable events. Such occasions enlarge the prestige of the organisers and the contributors. Extraordinary songs and dances become part of the Tiwi tradition and may be so for the decades to come. Tiwi rituals of importance are splendid affairs that have a strong sensual appeal. Ritualised gestures, dance movements of ancestors, intonations, body postures, citations of metaphors and song texts, painted designs, calls, allusions to dreamings, the mentioning of names, expressions of grief, and so forth may all be used to trace or track relationships with the deceased. In a ritual context clever politicians were able to enforce identity claims (often using the voice of the deceased as a rhetorical device) in order to advance their interests. We will see more of this below and in chapters 6 and 8. After this description of Tiwi mortuary practices and their burial ceremonies at the end of the 1980s, let me now turn to the funeral of the homicide victim.

5.3 Funeral at Pawularitarra

A new road was made to Pawularitarra in the bush, and the area was cleared because it was said to be infested with poisonous snakes. The stress on snakes had to do with the fact that these snakes were the deceased's dreaming and associated with his country (his country because his father was buried there). To the side of the sea strait abandoned corrugated iron shacks marked the former bush camp. The well had gone dry. Simon told me that when he lived at Pawularitarra he had met Minapini's spirit sitting at the well one night. Further out in the bush a few remaining mortuary poles of Minapini's grave were visible, as was an enamel dish left atop on the grave

mound. In the past Tiwi left food and water at the grave for the spirit of the dead (cf. Goodale 1971: 237, 252; Mountford 1958: 67).

People gathered in small groups at a distance from the old grave. Some of the ritual workers were digging a new grave next to the old one using a loader. The ritual workers also cleared a ceremonial ring (*milimika*) where the dancing would take place. Fires had been lit here in four directions in order to chase away the spirits of the dead (cf. Goodale 1971: 250). This was only done at mortuary rituals out in the bush; no such fires were lighted in the local Catholic cemeteries.

Tobias' close relatives painted themselves, mainly with red ochres associated with the deceased's country of origin, Tikelaru. They were wearing attributes such as bangles and cockatoo-feather headdresses. The body paintings and ceremonial attributes, 'a mask of the body' in the words of Morphy (1991), disguised the bereaved from the spirit of the dead and set them apart from the others (Goodale 1971, Mountford 1958).

One of the *ambaruwi* present at Pawularitarra, waiting for the arrival of the coffin, was Jessica Nemangerau. She walked back and forth between her temporary 'camp' and the new hole. In her *ambaru*-song she expressed the deceased would come her (his *amoa* or 'father's sister's daughter') way: (Dead man saying) 'You should find my *amoa* (singing) for me.' When she walked back Jessica monitored her audience, faced them, and sang: 'They are all looking at me, and I have no teeth in my mouth.' It was answered with laughter. Jessica sat down.

The corpse had been flown into Nguiu, where a Roman Catholic mass was said in the open air. At 11.30 a.m. little boats approached Melville Island. Some people rushed towards the sea. The coffin was placed on the back of a truck. The people at Pawularitarra began wailing.

Jessica's sister Nancy Kerimerini stood up. She walked backward and forward from her 'camp' in the direction of the sea, from where the coffin was coming. She sang a dialogue between her husband Sam and his deceased 'brother': 'I am thinking very hard for you, my brother.'; (Dead man saying) 'Me too, my brother, because somebody been murder me.' Some people in the audience called out in appreciation of the song. Nancy explained to me she had made this song for Sam at his request. 'He could not understand, he did not understand why that (the killing of his brother) happened to him', she said. When the coffin arrived Nancy sang the first part again, but she cut the last part of the song. She said she did so because her husband was 'deaf', meaning he was unable to understand in both senses.

The truck with the coffin arrived at the burial place. At various places men and women wailed loudly. Nancy kept singing her *ambaru*-song. Tobias' children came with their dead father in the rear of the truck. They, painted with red ochres, were grief-stricken and had to be pulled loose from the coffin. Jerome Pamantari, the principal ritual worker, stood in the back of the truck. He wore a black petticoat like a widow, because he replaced his late half-sister Kate who had been married to Tobias. In the past days he had

often said he would kill the 'murderer' wearing a petticoat. The truck was pulled backwards and the coffin was taken off by the ritual workers. It was placed on a tarpaulin next to the open grave. Tobias' children flung themselves on the coffin and embraced it. The people were standing in circles around it. The loud wailing continued. Nancy repeated her song. When she was finished Jessica took over the singing: (Dead man saying to her) 'When we met together, you did not scream for me!' The song text not only referred to her screaming in wailing but also to she and the deceased having been sweethearts previously. Tiwi lovers used to meet each other in the bush or the mangrove swamps. Often young men went 'hunting around' for young women. When the girl resisted she would start screaming to alarm others. But in this song Jessica made clear she had not been frightened of Tobias in the past.

Jerome sang an *ambaru*-song, walking back and forward, while lifting one hand in the air: (Dead man saying) 'You and I, we gotta have a good talk at Pularumpi.' The 'talk' in this type of song had a sexual connotation. The opposition of 'you and I', according to Nancy, showed Jerome had been sexually jealous of Tobias.

Jessica sang anew: (Dead man saying) 'Why are you singing short word?/You are my *amoa*.' Jessica had her own reasons not to perform an extensive widow-song. Several years before, Tobias had asked her to become his wife but she had refused. Because her eldest son had committed suicide the previous year she felt a relationship with a man was still *pukamani* to her.

Jack Munuluka, a clan brother of Tobias' father, performed a *mamanakuni*-song: (Dead man saying) 'I have my father the same.' Jack replaced the deceased's father as the 'boss' in the burial ceremonies. He used Tobias' voice as a rhetorical device.

Tobias' daughters continued their wailing. Jerome tried to get people ready to perform in the dancing ground next to the coffin. Some older men called out for the *mamurapi*. Several women and men went in separate groups to the coffin. They hit themselves with their fists, wailed loudly, and fell down at the coffin. Tobias' daughters picked them up. Care was taken to give the bereaved children plenty of water to drink.

Beside the dancing ground stood Harold Tampajani, a classificatory son of the deceased, with a bundle of spears that were painted red. This man of the Pandanus clan was said to have 'nearly' used the spears to avenge Tobias' death. The local police expected trouble at the burial and were present in the crowd. This, the uncertainty about who had killed Tobias, and the absence of at least two men (besides the man charged with murder) against whom suspicions had been raised, made a proper punishment impossible on this occasion. Harold represented his father Steven Tampajani, the principal *mutuni*, who had fallen ill. The bundle of spears expressed the intentions of their patrilineage and might be seen as a mere threat, because during the burial the bundle remained tied together with a string. In addition, the bundle stood for Minapini, Tobias' father and a sneak attacker of renown,

and the spears for his 'grandchildren' or *mawampi* now united as a 'one-grandfather-group' or *aminiyarti*. The members of such a group, *aminiatuwi*, formed, among other things, a 'fight company', supporting each other in fights.

A long (mosquito) call was given to start the dance and song ceremony near the coffin. Tobias' 'brother' Bruce Kerimerini (FMSS) composed the songs for the bereaved patrilineal 'children' or *mamurapi* (*turah*): (Dead man saying) 'I put my kids on my lap.' The dead man's classificatory sons (including me) were the first to dance the *turagha,* depicting both sneak attackers and spirit children (cf. Table.2). A group of female *mamurapi*, with Bruce and Sam's daughters amongst them, danced next. They danced with a slower pace, but otherwise the same as the men. Then the first group performed their dance for the second time. After the conclusion of this dance these men went towards the coffin, though avoiding their 'sisters', embraced each other and wailed and cried. The women also danced twice. Jessica supported her 'daughters' by dancing in the background. Her sister Nancy sang a mourning song outside the ceremonial ground: (Dead man saying) 'Big mob people came from everywhere, came for me and my father.' In her *ambaru*-song she emphasised the burial next to Minapini's grave was a prestigeous matter because it had drawn a very large attendance, and therefore her actual and classificatory children appeared to be considered important. The dancing of *mamurapi* proceeded.

Next came the grandchildren of some of Tobias' paternal 'brothers' (*mutuni*), the *kerimerika*, who acted as one body with the *mamurapi*. Again, Bruce composed the songs: 'I made the *milimika* (clear place) for you fellow, so you got to dance, and playing around here'; and 'I made a clear place for these *mawampi* (the deceased's 'grandchildren').' The texts alluded to the playing around of spirit children. Some *mawampi* were descendants of Minapini's 'brother' Kantilla and ended off their dance with a movement of the pig dance, turning their bottoms towards the coffin.

Jerome Pamantari directed Tobias' daughters, his nieces, to the dancing ground. They left the coffin. Theodore Pamantari, the husband of the eldest stepdaughter Ruth, composed the song for Tobias' daughters and son: 'He was here, he had all those children because he married his (second) wife/We are all together now, all one family.' Tobias' daughters danced the *turagha*. The song text refers to the dead man's second marriage. I was told that the dead man had taken his wife's spirit (Marylou was buried at Pularumpi) to Pawularitarra: 'he brought his wife and he stay with all his family now'. Theodore stressed that the dead man's family, the living as well as the dead, was reunited at Pawularitarra. The female and thereafter the male *mamurapi* danced for a second time. During their dancing the audience showed strong emotions of grief.

Bruce repeated the song he made earlier. Several man performed the pig dance, marking their dreaming. They concluded with hitting themselves with their fists or dropping on their backs. Tobias' daughters had to stop

them. The wailers focused on the deceased. Several men danced, looked at the coffin, jumped backwards high in the air and let themselves drop on their backs. A mother told her daughters to dance. These and a succeeding group of men belonged to the Munuluka family. Their wailing was very intense, suggesting they distanced themselves from the trouble between Tobias Arapi and Andrew Munuluka. A lover of Carol, one of Tobias' daughters, went to her. He embraced her, leaned with his head on her schoulder and cried loudly. When grieving, partners showed their affection more openly than in their daily lives.

The next category of bereaved were the *unantawi* (*pulanga*), led by the two most senior men of the Mosquito clan, Roger Imalu and Jack Munuluka. Minapini had been the second in line for the leadership of this clan. After the death of all influential clansmen of Minapini's generation, men of the second descending generation became the top generation and had to take over. Given the Tiwi system of alternating generations, Jack and Roger were clan brothers of Minapini and therefore 'fathers' of the deceased. They were the living people most eligible to head the mortuary rituals for Tobias. Roger sang: 'My *angimani* got a big penis.' Nancy explained to me he was 'swearing at himself' but that he mentioned his 'mother's mother's brother' or *angimani* Minapini instead of himself. He alluded, in addition, to Minapini's many actual and classificatory descendants. Roger danced with his hands in front of his genitals. He finished his dance by symbolically cutting off his penis with one hand. Jack danced next. Then his sister Mavis Pamantari and two other women performed their dance in female style, moving their hands away from and towards their lap. Two of the ritual workers supported them a little while. Mavis (*unantaka pulunga*) embraced her husband, who tried to comfort her. In the next round she combined the previous dance with arm movements of the mullet dance (the mullet fish was Tobias' dreaming). The women wailed loudly at the end of their performance. Roger composed a second song verse for further dance groups of his bereavement status: 'Oh, my "granny", he got a big penis.' The younger men jumped backwards into the air and let themselves drop on their shoulder blades. Others hit themselves with their fists on their bellies. Bruce tried to hold them and helped them to their feet. Jessica sang outside the dancing ground: (Dead man saying) 'Why you give me (your) back?', obviously a metaphorical way of saying death had divorced them. Nancy said her sister Jessica in her song pretended she and the deceased were lovers again, and the dead man asked her why she did not face him but turned away from him. She had refused to marry him, indeed.

The time for the actual interment of the coffin came near. People moved towards the open grave. Tobias' daughters had to be pulled off the coffin. The ritual workers took the coffin to the grave while the deceased's children wailed and cried loudly. The people flocked around the grave. The ritual workers dug out the last bit from the hole and cleared the walls. The coffin

was lowered into the grave. Tobias' children tried to follow their father into the grave; people had to hold them and pull them back forcefully. There was an enormous eruption of emotional expression, especially on the part of the bereaved children.

While the ritual workers shoveled the earth into the grave Tobias' lover Jasmine performed an *ambaru*-song: (Dead man saying to her) 'Why don't you come and talk to me now?/What about the other times I used to take you in my house?' She referred to her sexual liaison with Tobias. The 'talk' in this song is a Tiwi euphemism for intercourse. She used to come to his hut after drinking hours late at night. In this context it was not Tobias' hut where she was expected but in the seclusion of his grave (in the past a bereaved spouse went down in the grave).

The collective wailing, yelling, screaming and crying continued. People grouped in rings around the grave. In the inner rings the wailing was louder; outside, people went on with normal conversations. The loader assisted in closing the grave. Four men pushed to the ground Heather who again and again had tried to throw herself in the grave.

Isaac Pamantari, I was told, feared being given a 'hiding', a ritualised punishment with club beatings. In his *mamanakuni*-song, using Tobias' voice as a rhetorical device, he directed himself towards the spirit of Minapini: (Dead man saying) 'Mind my *ilimani* ('mother's brother'), don't hit him (with a stick).' Isaac might have expected Minapini, his brother-in-law, to retaliate for Tobias' death. He sang at the appropriate time for a punishment by the living to be carried out.

The grave mould had been made. A plastic bag, with some clothes of the dead man, was buried in the grave mould. Plastic flowers that had been lying on the coffin were placed on top of the mould. The people flocked around the newly made dance ground. The grave was now included in the ceremonial ring. The men started a second dance and song ceremony with a long (honey bee) call. Harold leaned on his bundle of spears. Bruce, again composed a song for his 'children', the *mamurapi*: 'Stretch your arms and dance *kutungura* and throw dirt with your feet.' The *kutungura* was an energetic dance in which the dancers threw up dirt with their feet. More often this dance was called *ampakitao,* but Tobias had given it as a name to a classificatory son, so after his death the name and the noun *ampakitoa* became taboo. As a result of this, Bruce had to use another word. He made clear in the song he was instructing them. This dance indicates the anger of the children towards their parents in throwing dirt. This cultural experience is played upon in the rituals as a strong symbol of the separation from the deceased parent.

Next, a group of young men, *mamurapi,* including Harold, danced the *turagha.* Thereafter came a group of dancers who danced their dreaming, the sailing boat. My 'brothers' and I went round in the *milimika* on our knees, 'raising the sails' in the mast with our arms. Then we straightened our bodies, with one arm upwards and one downwards showing how the

wind came in the sails, and then stretched our arms backwards, 'the wind blowing in the sails', and went around the ceremonial ring faster. After the burial there was a stronger emphasis on the dreamings shared with the deceased, identifying the latter with the spiritual world. The dance of the sailing boat (*kapalla*) had been choreographed by Mukankum in the mortuary rituals for Tobias' deceased sister Donna in the early 1930s (cf. chapter 4). These dances too had separation from the deceased as their theme.

While the first group of *mamurapi* danced, Nancy sang an *ambaru*-song, which she repeated several times. She had been Tobias' lover. Now she let him tell her in the song to go back to her husband and leave him alone. The focus of attention was redirected in the song. The sickness of Tobias' 'brother' Sam, Nancy's husband, legitimated her separation from him. She then had to take care of her husband, because the dead man wanted it. When still alive, he used to bring his sick 'brother' bush food: (Dead man saying) 'Look, you have to look after my brother well.'

In the ceremonial ring the dancing and singing of Bruce's song continued. The next group, people from the Wangiti patrilineage, performed the buffalo dance. Their dreaming, the buffalo, was associated with the deceased. With their feet and stretched arms they marked the galloping buffalo. Then they held their arms like the buffalo's horns. Once again, these dances indicate an anger and aggression that brings forth a separation. In the end the buffalo was running away; the performers were distancing themselves from the deceased. They threw themselves on top of the grave and wailed. Their 'relations' called out to the close relatives of the deceased when they were not stopped from injuring themselves quickly enough or picked up from the grave mould.

Finally, while he was crying at the grave, Jack Munuluka composed a *mamanukuni* song. He could sing this because he was Tobias' 'father'. Jack's clan brother Kevin Wangiti was charged with the murder. As a member of the family of the alleged murderer he had to show indignation in his song as a way of disclaiming any share of the guilt: 'Good job, police took him who did it quickly./If he was here, I would put a two-sided barbed spear (*arawuningkiri*) through his chest!' Nancy said, 'It is like he put that man, he spear him with the knife and left him on the ground.' In other words, a retaliation for Tobias' violent death.

The next group to dance were the *mutuni*. Steven Tampajani, a thin old man who had his body painted with yellow ochre, was sick and did not dance. He was the most important *mutuni* (later he would be buried next to Tobias). William Palurati, another paternal 'brother' of the deceased, composed a song. He sang about his dreaming, a kind of mullet, that was shared with the dead man: 'He is here, big waves!' In his song William noticed the mullet (*takaringa*) in the water. He shared this dreaming with Tobias because both their fathers belonged to the Mullet quasi-semi-moiety (they were *takaringuwi*). In their dance the *mutuni* held their cheeks with one hand,

marking their bereavement status of losing 'one side of their face.' The other arm was stretched and held away from the body, moving upwards and downwards. This marked the mullet moving its tail in the water. So the two aspects of their relationship to the deceased were here combined in one dance. William made a second song: 'He is working his tail in the water!' The *mutuni* had their cheeks painted. They finished their dance by smashing their cheek with one hand. A woman of the *mutuni* bereavement status started her dance by hitting Steven in his face.

Men of the Palurati patrilineage sat on the ground with crossed legs and moved forwards. This was the turtle dance (*tarakalani*), once choreographed by their patrilineal ancestor. This dreaming dance identified a patrilineal group related to the dead man. Roger Imalu composed a song for his son, one of the *mutuni*: (He is saying to his son) 'Everybody will talk about you and scratch (one side of) your face.' The scratching is an allusion to the way Tobias met with his death. Roger stressed his son's performance would make him 'important'; everybody would talk about him. Both his two sons performed the next dance, beginning and concluding with hitting each other on their cheeks.

After a little break the last category of bereaved, the *ambaruwi*, performed. The first to sing was Cecil Jatukwani, who had been married to Tobias' deceased half-sister Patty: (Dead man saying) 'You dance for me, you Larrakian, because you had my sister.' Brothers-in-law in daily life jokingly exchanged insults. In the song Tobias called his brother-in-law a 'Larrakian', meaning Cecil ought not to have married Tobias' sister.without returning a 'sister' to Tobias, hence the insult.[86] At this point Cecil was at least obliged to dance for him.

Simon was encouraging people to clap. Cecil went around the grave. He put his knees outwards and closed them. So he kept dancing *impula*, 'see the knees'. Normally Tiwi wives did not show their knees but kept them carefully covered. Moving the legs swiftly outwards, 'soaking', and showing the knees is a Tiwi female strategy for seduction. Consequentely, an adulterous partner was always hit with a stick against the knees. Actually, Cecil in his dance was pretending he was having sexual intercourse with the imaginary spirit of the deceased. The last movements of the dance were like he had finished copulating. Cecil composed a second song: (Dead man saying) 'That's the last time you gotta see me (what I am doing).' Other people danced as if engaged in sexual intercourse. They directed themselves to the grave mould. Cecil, carried away by his ritual role, told one man, who had a reputation for having a small penis, 'You big one, big enough to dance'.

Besides the dances mentioned and the dances with fighting movements, another characteristic dance of the *ambaruwi* was that of the shark chasing the stingray. At Tobias' funeral there was one family group (Kitiruta) who enacted this dance. They pronounced the name of the shark twice ('*kutuntua - kutuntua*'). The grandfather of the dancers made this dance. They made the

sounds of the shark ('brrruuhh, brruuhhh') and went around the grave mould, singing '*kutuntua - kutuntua*'. Finally they also wailed, hit themselves with their fists, and had to be stopped by the close relatives of the deceased.

The *ambaruwi* who acted as ritual workers were the partners of the paternal and maternal half-'siblings' of the dead person; in other words, the partners of the *mutuni* and the *paputawi* respectively. Alan Pamantari, the health worker who found out that Tobias was dead, sang next: (Dead man saying) 'Hello, my brother-in-law!' Tobias used to greet him in this way. He and his 'brothers' danced with fighting movements. Then Jasmine's sisters danced. Simon Pamantari told his daughters to dance. They were promised but not married to Steven Tampajani, the *mutuni,* and started with smashing him in his face. The wife of a maternal 'brother' of the deceased (*putani*) danced next. She kicked her husband on his leg. He followed her in her dance with the movements of the waves on the beach. Other people in this category danced in the same way. Jessica, a former girlfriend of the deceased, danced *ambaru.* At the end of her dance she threw kisses to Steven, her previous lover, a gesture she adopted from her mother. She also threw kisses at the grave and in doing so expressed a particular relationship. Alan sang again: (Dead man saying) 'If you go back to Pularumpi today don't talk to any man.' This was a communication between lovers. Nancy, however, told me that she thought the song was directed at her husband Sam, against whom suspicions had been raised.

Simon's eldest son Rolf Pamantari danced. Afterwards he leaned on his wife and cried. Jerome suggested something to the group of older men of the Pandanus clan. He wanted the dead man's lover, his clan sister Jasmine, to dance. They agreed and passed the message. 'His girlfriend before gonna dance now', Simon said, 'two girlfriends'.

Jerome Pamantari composed the following song: (Dead man saying) 'Oh, you get smelly skirts.' Jasmine danced, opening and closing her legs, around the grave. She held her skirt lifted up in front. Her husband Andrew Munuluka stood near the grave. He supported her, moving his hands, pushing backwards and forwards, like waves breaking on the beach. 'He didn't know dead man took his wife', Simon said to me, probably indicating the night of the killing. Jasmine danced a second time and threw her skirt off. She ended her dance on the grave mould as if she was engaged in intercourse.

Nancy Kerimerini was the second girlfriend who had to dance. She instructed her 'brother' Jerome about what she was planning to do. Jerome sang: 'You take my top off.' Nancy made a new dance. She entered the ring and took her top off. She did it a second time and danced bare-breasted. The undressing was part of the ritual role of the widow. Nancy made an innovation taken from her personal experience with the deceased. It would be followed by other people enacting this role in the future. When she had finished her dance she joined Tobias' daughters who were sitting at the grave. Jerome was the last man to dance, 'the bencher' in the words of

Simon. He repeated his former songs. Wearing a petticoat, he walked backward and forward in the dancing ground around the grave lifting one hand.

A long, loud and collective wailing around the grave mould was the final act of the funeral ceremony. Jack Munuluka sang a *mamanukuni* while he was crying: (Dead man saying to him) 'All right daddy, you may go home now.' Jack rhetorically establised his importance in this song. He was the one who had directed the funeral ceremony. The dead man was happy with him. The grave was covered with a blue tarpaulin. The mourners stepped over the grave mound so the spirit of the dead would not follow them. After ten months the people would come back for the final ceremony. Until then the burial place and its surroundings would remain taboo and be a private hunting ground for the spirit of the dead.

5.4 Cleansing rituals

After the funeral there were cleansing rituals to chase the spirit of the dead away from the places closely associated with Tobias while alive. He and his late wife Marylou had been guides at Putramirra Safari Camp, some 20 km north of Pularumpi. Tobias had decided he would leave Pularumpi when his job there was finished with the onset of the wet season. In the same weekend, however, he met with his death.

In the Safari Camp the tents were already packed up, and two days after the funeral the camp would be formally closed until the next dry season. The bereaved daughters from Milikapiti - Ruth, Judy and Heather - gathered at Sam's place in the Old Camp, where their sister Laura also lived. This time they had brought wild geese to be shared with Sam's and Jerome's group. Relationships were substantiated in this way because the daughters had become dependent on them as ritual workers. Later the trucks left for the purification rituals at Putjamirra. En route we passed a mortuary pole. This marked the location where Marylou had died in a car crash; Tobias had placed her hunting bucket upside-down on top of the pole. At Pularumpi beach people spotted Irokepei, a crocodile. Nancy reminded me that Irekopei (the mytholocial Crocodile Man from Minapini's and Tobias' country at Cape Fourcroy) had been in the creek at Matalau, but that Minapini did not fight him (Irekopei was the dreaming of his victims who were dancing the crocodile dance). Oscar Pamantari tried to shoot him, 'the cheeky one', but missed. Jerome, the principal ritual worker, sang about Tobias' longing for his own country, from where his father, and consequently he himself, had been banned forever. The red cliffs and white beach at Putjamirra were very similar to those of his own country at Cape Fourcroy: (Dead man saying) 'I gave sorry that place Cape Fourcroy (Tupupruluppi).' Nancy explained that Tobias had always been talking about going back. He had been thinking about that while he had been sitting there.

Jerome and other ritual workers cleared the firepits at the camp. The place was surrounded with mortuary poles, a display of Tiwi 'culture' for tourists. Many of the poles had been sold to the European manager of the business after they had figured in mortuary rituals. One pole, made by Tobias, was covered with a towel; this showed that the poles even then were not completely decontextualised. This particular pole was too much charged with emotions to leave it uncovered.

Nancy walked back and forth in the direction of the fire place. She performed an *ambaru*-song telling the bereaved children that their father used to work there: 'Your father used to work here at this sorrowful place!/He used to make clear place, good place, Putjamirra.' She made an allusion to the aspect of ritual cleansing. Tobias cleaned the place and cooked bush and sea foods at that location. At this point he had the place cleaned for his children to dance (a conventional theme in mortuary ritual). Jerome, assisted by male ritual workers, lit a fire to produce smoke.

Roger Imalu, a classificatory father of Tobias, wailed. He was the boss in this ceremony. The men started with a honey bee call around the fire. Roger called out the significant place names from Pularumpi to Putramirra (Irumokulumi (Pularumpi), Tuwanapula, Wotjitopi, and Tuoleipi). The other men responded with calling *weya* or 'finished' after each place name. Nancy, holding the mortuary pole with the towel, called out names of Tobias' *mutuni* to draw the attention of his spirit. She had to call out these names instead of Tobias' names, which had become taboo.

The ritual workers carried burning green boughs around the firepits to chase the spirit of the dead away with smoke and to beat the *pukamani* (taboos) out. The other people followed them. The campfires and Tobias' mortuary pole were given special treatment. Jerome gave Roger a harpoon-like spear (his dreaming was the turtle, which was hunted with a harpoon). Roger sang while he symbolically 'speared' a campfire that had been used by Tobias: 'Minapini used to carry the one-sided barbed spear (*tunkwaliti*) and stuck it in the ground.' Roger performed the dance because he was Minapini's clan brother.

Tobias' children and granddaughter, Laura's daughter who had come over from Darwin for the funeral, danced with imaginary spears. It was the dance of the *mamurapi*. They pretended to spear the same place. Mavis Pamantari, who was a clan sister of Minapini (Mosquito clan) and hence a bereaved paternal 'mother' (*unantana pulanga*), danced with an umbrella. She too speared the place in her dance. She wailed and was supported by her husband.

The bereaved children (*mamurapi turah*) and parents (*unantawi pulanga*, F'B' and F'Z') performed their dances together. Because of the Tiwi system of alternating generations they constituted one group of patrilineal *unantawi*.

After this followed the concluding performances of the ritual workers and widows (*ambaruwi*). Jerome composed the following song: 'I am widow but I made the place clean first for my husband to lie down.' Jerome here

criticised Tobias, who had in his opinion not cleaned their sleeping place well enough so that Kate, Jerome's half-sister, was bitten by a poisonous snake. The text further had sexual overtones in the widow preparing a place for her husband to lie down and at the same time referred to her ritual activities to put the spirit of the dead husband to rest.

The dance performances of the ritual workers had the termination of sexual intercourse as their common theme although it was acted out in their personal styles directed at the focal campfire. A sudden kick or backward movement concluded the dances. Jasmine, for instance, lifted her skirts and the men pulled back their pelvis from an imaginary coital position.

The landrover from the Safari Camp was treated in a ritual cleansing with smoke as well. The ritual workers were paid for their services. Jasmine initially refused to accept the money, suggesting she was an actual widow. Somewhat later, however, she took it. Because of this costly business the cleansing of Tobias' hut was scheduled the next weekend, when the bereaved children had had another payday.

Late at night, Jasmine came to our place to compose a mourning song for Tobias: (Dead man saying) 'My *mawana* (M'B'D, potential wife) was doing lovely dance for me.' Jasmine noted that she had danced, both at the funeral and the 'smoking', as a widow. By lifting her skirts she showed him her pubic region for the last time, a conventional theme in Tiwi mortuary ritual. Instead of Tobias' tabooed names she called out the names of three of his female *mutuni* (F'B'Z's).[87] Jasmine cried. She told us how fond she had been of Tobias.

Tiwi people held that Tobias' spirit was still roaming around in the village. Within a week after the purification rituals at Putjamirra, a classificatory sister of Isaac Pamantari (FBD) died in Pularumpi. Isaac was in deep grief and led the funeral as a *mutuni*. Bruce and Sam Kerimerini were maternal 'fathers' of the deceased (*unandawi pularti*). Bruce had a bandage wrapped around his chest. He had fractured his ribs when he fell on the bed with the corpse while 'saying sorry'. Sam said he felt pain in his chest as well and would go to hospital for an x-ray. Their breasts marked the relationship with the dead woman. Tobias' stepdaughter Ruth was given opportunity to earn money as an *ambaru*. The next day Tobias' little house would be ritually cleansed.

Early in the morning the ritual workers cleaned Tobias' hut and the surrounding area. They scrubbed the house with water, brought fresh sand for the dancing ground, and raked the place. The people gathered at Sam's place in the Old Camp. A mass would be said at Tobias' hut by the town clerk, a devout Catholic of mixed descent, and a non-resident priest.

The priest blessed the house and its verandah as well as the spot where the corpse had been. During the mass more people came to the scene. At the end of mass the batteries of the cassette player playing religious music ran out. The priest spoke of 'magic'. He concluded, 'That is the end of mass. I

invite you now to do your ceremony'. In this way the missionaries from Bathurst Island propagated an integration of Tiwi and Catholic ceremonies. On Melville Island this policy was usually met by Tiwi people with much less enthusiasm than on Bathurst Island.

The participants, painted with white ochres, separated into groups. A fire was lighted by the ritual workers using boughs from the mango tree to produce smoke. The ritual started with a long honey bee call. Jack Munuluka, the boss, began with singing: 'We got them burn him Minapini house.' In other words, this man (*unantani pulanga*, a classificatory father of Tobias) had gathered the people for a ritual cleansing with smoke of Tobias' house.

Tobias' close relatives walked in the smoke around the bin with fire. Following this, the ritual workers went ahead with the green boughs bringing smoke to the tabooed locations and therewith chasing the spirit of the dead away. The others followed. They went over the verandah and into the house. There the ritual workers opened the louvers of the two small windows. The singing and dancing continued. Nancy's elder half-brother Alec Adranango, a man of the Pandanus clan, was one of the ritual workers. He sang: (House saying) 'Hey, you got to find cheek to burning this house.' The bereaved children wailed inside the house facing the place where Tobias used to sleep. Then the louvers were closed and the people left the house. Jerome, the principal ritual worker, sang: 'My friend put that spear up the house and somebody has been taken the spear away.' The gist of Jerome's song was that Tobias had been rightly killed there.[88] He continued: 'My friend Minapini's bundle of spears has been taken away.' In other words, Minapini's last surviving son now had also been killed. It was an allusion to Minapini's actions as a killer at Matalau, where he carried a bundle of spears. Minapini killed one man's sons, now his own sons (the bundle of spears) both had died as well, their lives taken away. In Jerome's perception, Tobias' violent death made these killings by his father at the beginning of the century level.

The dancing ground was where the dead body had been found. This place was ritually cleansed with smoke. Martha Arapi, Minapini's only surviving wife, sat down at the place where the corpse had been lying next to the bin with smoke. The *ambaruwi* danced. Mike Kerimerini dropped down, wailing 'daddy, daddy, daddy'. The bereaved daughters wailed again. Jack and Roger, Tobias' 'fathers', composed a new song about the dreaming (mullet fish) they had in common with their clan brother Minapini: 'In this place a big mullet was lying down and there was dancing around.' The big mullet (*tikupali*) that was lying down in the song was Tobias. This meant that his dead body was found at that location. The bereaved fathers and children performed the mullet dance.

A bucket with water was placed on the spot. Jack sang: 'I am Patuapura, big waves washed my head and my arms.' Patuapura was another name for Rocky Point, the petrified clan ancestress Pungalo holding her two children in her arms, at the west coast of Bathurst Island. This was one of

the most sacred places on the islands. It belonged to the Stone clan (*pungaluwila*) of which Tobias and his elder 'brothers' Sam and Bruce were members. Jack could identify with Pungalo through his father's sister (it was his father's dreaming). It was an approriate song because the water in the bucket was used to wash head and arms by people thus identified. This cleansing ritual with water (*moluki*) released them of some mourning taboos until the final rituals, especially the taboo on playing cards. Tobias' bereaved 'parents', 'brothers' and (actual and classificatory) children, performing the dance movement of a diving mullet, washed their lower arms and heads with the water. The ritual workers danced in a fighting pose, fighting off the spirits of the dead, in the background.

The dance and song ceremony recommenced. Jerome now sang: 'The women (Tobias' deceased wives) asked, Why did you come and dance for our husband?', denoting these spirits were jealous. The *ambaruwi* danced in their personal (inherited) styles. Jessica, for instance, threw kisses to the focal point of the ceremony, the place where the corpse had been found, representing her ex-lover Tobias, just like her mother used to do. Jasmine lifted her skirts, denoting the termination of her sexual relationship with the deceased. Some of the ritual workers were supported in their dances by bereaved affines, who in their dance made pushing movements with their hands like waves coming on the shore; as mentioned before, this dance had a sexual connotation for Tiwi. For instance, a maternal 'brother' of the deceased (*putani*) 'helped' his wife's sisters in their dances. At the beginning and the end of the dance the latter kicked his leg (denoting his relationship to the deceased; paternal 'siblings' or *mutuni* were slapped in the face). The number of ritual workers, seven males and seven females, indicated it was a prestigeous ceremony.

The bereaved relatives laid money together for one ritual worker after the other. Jack composed a new song accompanying the payment dances: 'Apungautak'kuranaumi (Kantilla), he followed Minapini.' Jack's grandfather Kantilla followed Tobias' father Minapini in killing people. In this song Jack put the senior man Kantilla last and made Minapini more important than his actual grandfather. To put it slightly differently, Jack acknowledged Minapini had acquired more prestige by his prowess as a fighter and killer. It was through organising the postfuneral rituals for Tobias that Jack hoped to obtain prestige for himself. He thus identified himself as related more closely to Tobias than the other classificatory father, Roger from Pularumpi. It was his grandfather who had been Minapini's companion, not Roger's grandfather. The money was brought to the ritual workers by the bereaved children, one by one, in their *mamurapi* dance with imaginary spears. When they were giving out the money they pretended they speared. The payments per ritual worker ranged from 40 to 100 dollars. At the end of the ceremony, an elaboration of a house 'smoking' that was usually a small affair, Tobias' son Ralph and daughter Carol from Nguiu arrived. They had come too late to participate in the ritual. They were led into Tobias' house, where they wailed.

Above I presented detailed descriptions of mortuary rituals, and the burial ceremonies and cleansing rituals concerning Tobias in particular, to show the richness of Tiwi cultural action at the end of the 1980s and to show that seemingly trivial details matter. The rituals for Tobias were more elaborate than those in other cases: following his violent death his spirit had to be neutralised, and relationships disrupted by the killing had to be renegotiated or restored. The white police were present at Tobias' burial in order to prevent an outbreak of violence. Plans for an eventual punishment of the killer(s) were postponed. There was too much uncertainty.

The rituals had a conventional framework, but within this framework the creativity of the performers was encouraged. In the ritual drama the frame narrative was that of guiding the spirit of the deceased from the world of the living to the world of the dead. In Tiwi eschatology the spirits of the deceased had to 'follow' their father and father's father. Hence, patrilineal relatives of the deceased play the most significant roles in the mortuary rituals. With their identifications they laid out the spiritual track, so to speak. Their focus was the same as the destiny of the new spirit of the dead. The names of *mutuni*, for instance, are used instead of those of the dead person: the *mutuni* symbolically lose one side of their face, to be recovered again at their actual and classificatory common father's or father's father's burial place, identifying them as whole. The participants enacted ritual roles indicated by a special mortuary kinship terminology. These various roles were enacted in a certain sequence of performances in the dance and song ceremony (*yoi*). In this sequence of performances the new spirit of the dead was constituted. Each category of personnel, enacting a particular role, contributed a part to the whole. In the breaking of ties, conventional metaphors were employed envisioning the relationship with the deceased from a particular angle. At the same time, reflections on personal experiences relating to the deceased could be woven into these performances. The song texts were often dialogues between the performer and the spirit of the deceased, and simulaneously were directed at the audience. These more personal narratives within the larger framework might be seen as reflections on the performer from the perspective of the deceased. In disconnecting or distancing the deceased from the self, as it were (e.g., the *paputawi* who lose one of their legs), a relative autonomy could be realised. The voice of the deceased could be employed as a rhetorical device. Tiwi death rituals offered opportunities to obtain prestige and influence; original contributions added to the prestige of the performer. Within the rituals, as clearly shown in the song texts (cf. Berndt 1950), people could express their grief in a somewhat personalised way. Exchange relations between the ritual workers and their employers were created or intensified. The song texts had often multiple meanings, one following the line and conventions of the ritual framework, others with personal messages. I believe these texts were deliberately ambiguous (see also Keen 1977). The skilled song composers had an advantage over others: they not

only gave instructions and enacted ceremonial leadership roles (as 'bosses') but were also able to stress particular identifications (more than others who excelled in other media of artistic expression, such as dancing) and therewith defined or redefined reality. We have seen that the Tiwi rituals were not fixed, nor were the mortuary practices. There were a number of innovations, and the ideal *pukamani* rules were not strictly adhered to but had become a more personal expression of grief. (We will see more of this in chapter 8, which deals with postfuneral rituals.) In the next chapter I discuss the seasonal yam rituals, which also had mortuary aspects, especially in the so-called 'night of sorrow'. In 1989, the two major yam rituals on the islands were dedicated to Tobias.

6 THE SEASONAL YAM RITUALS

6.1 Introduction

At dusk on May the 18th, 1989, Jack Munuluka stamped his feet on the shore of Bathurst Island. He faced Tobias' grave behind the moonlit mangroves on the other side of the Apsley Strait. Jack was said to be 'awakening' the spirit of the dead man, telling him he was going to carry out the seasonal yam ritual or *kulama*: 'My son, my own son listen to me!/I'm doing *kulama* tonight.'

Both in Nguiu on Bathurst Island and in Pularumpi on Melville Island, a 1989 yam ritual was dedicated to Tobias. The grieving over the deceased of the past year was an important aspect of these rituals, ideally held at the close of the wet season. Spirits of the dead were supposed to attend the *kulama* ritual (cf. Goodale 1971: 186) and some of the bereaved tended to come to listen to the mourning songs performed for their deceased relatives. During the first night in particular, often termed 'the night of sorrow', songs were about grief and grievances. Jack called out to the spirit of his classificatory son Tobias because quite a number of mourning songs would be performed for him, as well as a few songs of revenge. In 1989, senior men participating in the *kulama* rituals urged the person(s) who had killed Tobias to come out.

The *kulama* might be best understood as a ritual complex encompassing a number of 'ritual genres', as Turner calls it (1973: 1100). At the end of the 1980s the ritual lasted three complete nights and the days in between. It was structured by the ritual procedures of processing a certain type of round tuber with hairy roots, called *kulama*. These yams were poisonous in a raw state but would become edible when carefully prepared, roasted and soaked during the ritual. Whereas other kinds of yams were mainly dug out and prepared by women, the *kulama* yams had to be treated, solely in the course of the ritual, by men only. The annual *kulama* rituals were major events in the gradual initiation of men and women. The performance of the rituals when the *kulama* yams had ripened marked the transition of the wet season to the dry season. The rituals were concerned not only with the change of season and initiation but also with interpersonal conflicts, the dead, increase of the natural environments and food production, human reproduction, prosperity, health, and people's well-being in general. The rituals might be seen as psychotherapeutic in enabling the participants to deal with all sorts of 'trouble', such as worries, fears, bad luck, complaints, grievances, and grief. These may be freely expressed in front of a forum in this ritual context without provoking counteraction (cf. Goodale 1971: 188).

I see regeneration and the countering of 'bad luck' and 'trouble', in a broad sense, as the main foci of the ritual. The poisonous *kulama* yam appeared to be a potent symbol of sickness and danger; when processed in the ritual, however, rubbing the body with a mixture of yam mash and red ochres was considered an effective prophylactic and healing ritual. At the beginning of the ritual, danger was represented by the pretended coming of sneak attackers. The men in the *kulama* declared that they would fight these killers. As in rites of passage in general, a symbolic death or killing and rebirth were important to mark transitions in the *kulama* ritual (cf. Hertz 1960: 81). With regard to its relevance to the topic of this work I will discuss the symbolic killings in greater detail below. In sum, the *kulama* might be considered a complex ritual in which the participants, through purification procedures and subsequent symbolic actions, worked towards a renewal and regeneration of their world.

In the next section I present a general account of the *kulama*, based on previous ethnographic reports and my own observations. A brief discussion of the yam rituals of one wet season follows on this (section 6.3). I then describe a 1989 *kulama* ritual on Melville Island and one on Bathurst Island as far as relevant to the present case (sections 6.4 and 6.5). Finally I discuss the meanings of symbolic killings in Tiwi ritual.

6.2 The *kulama*

Initiation

Previous ethnographic accounts of *kulama* rituals, dating back to 1912, permit us to view these rituals with some time depth. As mentioned before, the *kulama* was an initiation ritual. Rather exceptional in Aboriginal Australia, both men and women were initiated in the same *kulama* rituals (Spencer 1914: 91; Maddock 1986: 125).[89]

It appears that during the twentieth century the age of the initiates increased dramatically, the condition that the male initiates must be bachelors was dropped, and that in the second half of the century the formal initiation procedures for women were no longer held. Whereas at the beginning of the century everyone was initiated, the number of people being initiated and performing the *kulama* became ever fewer. My own findings confirmed Goodale's suggestion that initiation became limited to those 'able and willing to play responsible and leading roles in the ceremonial life' (1971: 206). At the end of the 1980s the mortuary rituals were indeed led almost exclusively by '*kulama* men'. Men in their thirties and forties who excelled in performing in the mortuary rituals, and who approached top-generation positions in their matriclans and patrilineages, were pointed out to be ready to be taken into the *kulama*. In the second half of the century the initiation procedures had become shorter and less elaborate (cf. Brandl 1970: 474; Grau 1983: 156). The eight men who participated in the two yam rituals I witnessed had all undergone a 'short-cut' initiation. The women had

learned the song techniques by singing after the men. Two men in their fifties who had entered initiation but failed in composing the intricate and complex *kulama* songs told me that they, therefore, had to give up. They did not object 'to the lengthy procedures' (Goodale 1971: 183n.2) but hoped the seven grades of initiation would be restored so they and others would be able to learn in small steps and at a slower pace.

The marriage politics of the Bathurst Island Mission, founded in 1911, and the supression of Tiwi rituals for a number of decades must have had a strong impact on Tiwi initiations. Indoctrination and seclusion of a large number of young Tiwi women eligible for initiation at the convent of the mission prevented their initiation at an appropriate age. A major factor must have been the unprecedented opportunity for young men to obtain a wife from the Catholic mission at an age at which they could not have completed initiation. With this option, Tiwi males did not have to undergo the harsh initiation procedures previously required to become married. Changes in the Tiwi way of life, in addition, made problematic the isolation of young male initiates in the bush for years on end.

Tobias' slightly elder brother Jacob was the last person I heard of being forcefully captured as an initiate. It happened at Garden Point during the Second World War. A friend of his remembered how frightened he had been when he returned from the bush with two infected cicatrices over his chest. Probably on instigation of his father, Jacob got a start in life corresponding to the old-style career of Tiwi males (cf. Hart & Pilling 1960: chapter 3). He obtained an old widow as his first wife but did not succeed in becoming a polygynist and adding younger wives to his household. Tobias, in contrast to Jacob, chose to be a nominal monogamist and married a mission-raised young woman when they both were only eigtheen years old. Tobias had a 'short-cut' initiation after marriage. In chapter 3 I described the conflict between the two brothers that revolved around their shared rights regarding Tobias' second wife Kate, with whom Jacob was said to have been 'going around'.

The new male initiates were forcibly captured by surprise from their paternal camps by their sisters' husbands or their prospective brothers-in-law, men they probably had never seen before. The kidnappings must have been a traumatic experience, as follows from Hart's vivid description of one such occasion at the end of the 1920s:

> Then suddenly one day, toward evening when the people are gathering around their campfires for the main meal of the day after coming in from their day's hunting and food-gathering, a group of three or four heavily armed and taciturn strangers appear in camp. In full war regalia they walk in silence to the camp of the boy and say curtly to the household: 'We have come for So-and-So.' Immediately pandemonium breaks loose. The mother and the rest of the older women begin to howl and wail. The father rushes for his spears. The boy himself, panic-stricken, tries to hide, the younger children begin to cry, and the household dogs begin to bark. (...) [The strangers] are men from outside the encampment, or outside the band, who, under any circumstances would be greeted by a shower of spears. But not under these circumstances (...). The father of the boy and the other adult men of the camp not only knew they were

> coming but even agreed with them on a suitable day for them to come. The father's rush for his spears to protect his son and to preserve the sanctity of his household is make-believe. If he puts on too good an act, the older men will intervene and restrain him from interfering with the purposes of the strangers. With the father immobilized the child clings to his mother, but the inexorable strangers soon tear him (literally) from his mother's arms and from the bosom of his bereaved family, still as grimly as they came, bear him off into the night (1974: 349-50).

The seizure of the male initiates closely resembles the actions of sneak attackers (*kwampi*) not only in the appearance of the putative strangers taking their victim by suprise but also in the resulting, although merely symbolic, death of their victim. Brandl, without referring to the *kwampi*, compares the capture of the initiate in some ways with a 'sudden death' too. The young man, she points out, was abruptly removed from his consociates who reacted with 'laments and protest'. She sees it as an act of separation, the first phase of the initiation as a 'large-scale *rite de passage*' (1971: 328). Earlier, Hertz has drawn attention to the similarities between initiation and symbolic death (1960: 80).[90] The *kulama* rituals I attended in 1989, as well as the mortuary rituals for Tobias, had a special quality because these were attempts to gain redress following an actual killing.

I will not dwell on the extensive and elaborate initiation procedures here, for in late twentieth-century Tiwi society these had become less relevant.[91] It must be realised that a number of initiation rituals did not take place during the *kulama*; however, the yam ritual was a major ritual event wherein the initiates were promoted from one grade of initation to another. As mentioned before, during the ten to twelve years of initiation young men were *pukamani* and therefore faced strict taboos, including the taboo on sexual intercourse. Tiwi men under the conditions of olden times thus could not marry before they had been fully initiated and were in their mid-twenties (Hart & Pilling 1960: 93-5). Then the male initiate had been for about four years in the last grade of initiation and finally became a 'free man' (*ipungkeripia*), ending the state of *pukamani* (Brandl 1971: 332-3). This equalled the situation of the surviving spouse after the accomplishment of the mortuary rituals (ibid.: 333). My informants said that a widow released from the *pukamani* taboos was a 'free woman' and could marry again. Spencer notes a close resemblance between the treatment of the *kulama* yams and the initiates in the *kulama* ritual. He writes, 'The initiation of young men on Melville Island is intimately associated with what is known as a Yam ceremony' (1914: 92). This is noted in later accounts, notably Goodale's (1971: 213, 222), as well. I will briefly comment on the similarities in the discussion of the *kulama* below.

A ritual complex

In certain respects the *kulama* ritual and the mortuary rituals might be seen as complementary. A young man thought to be ready for the *kulama* (*ilanighi*) would first be selected to perform in a small postfuneral dance ritual, called *ilanigha*. There were also additional postfuneral rituals

preceding the grand final ritual (*iloti*), such as the tossing of initiates (or the tossing of a goose-feather ball as a substitute for the initiates), tree-climbing and fire-jumping by initiates. A song text earlier composed for the *kulama* could be used in one of the *ilanigha*. In the *kulama* the participants, referred to with the approriate mortuary kinship terms, performed mourning songs and wailed for the deceased of the past year. At some stages in the yam ritual they danced and sang (*yoi*) in the style of the mortuary rituals. The taboos on the names of the dead could be lifted during the *kulama* and these names could be transmitted to children. In both rites of passage, the mortuary rituals and the *kulama* ritual, there was a symbolism of death and rebirth. Whereas the yam ritual brought about an initiation into adult life, the mortuary rituals initiated the spirits of the deceased into the world of the dead. The mortuary rituals focused on the world of the dead, while the *kulama* was directed towards a renewal and regeneration of the world of the living. Ideally, in both types of ritual the participants were subjected to *pukamani* taboos. Furthermore, in the *kulama* as well as the mortuary rituals the participants painted their bodies with ochres and pipeclay, wore a number of ceremonial ornaments (the cockatoo-feather headdresses, goose-feather balls, and armbands made of pandanus leaves); in both, participants made ritual calls, used fire, smoke and water, cleared the ceremonial grounds, employed the symbolism of burial, killing, and depilation, and so forth. Ritual events or actions belonging to the *kulama* could be used in the mortuary rituals and vice versa, their meaning dependent on the context.[92]

Perhaps it is better to postulate Tiwi ceremonial life as a large ritual complex rather than making arbitrary divisions between the *kulama*, the mortuary rituals, and other rituals.[93] For example, in the past the initiation was a 'business' that went the whole year through and its ritual aspects were not restricted to the *kulama* exclusively. Mourning songs (*mamanakuni* and *ambaru*-songs) could be performed at any time and were sung on occasions of *kulama* and mortuary rituals. Certain *pukamani* taboos applied to bereaved, initiates, young women with their first menses (the *muringelata* ritual), pregnant women, the father and mother around childbirth, women with babies, sneak attackers, and so forth. Daily and ceremonial life were interwoven in too many instances (e.g., mourning, visiting and leave-taking, lovemaking, fighting, hunting, singing and dancing in camp at night, in particular social relationships, life stages, dreams and visions) to justifiably pose clear-cut and fixed boundaries between aspects of Tiwi experience that were more or less intermingled. True, events like the yam ritual and the mortuary rituals might be singled out, and in the late twentieth century context seem to be set apart even more, albeit these also might be seen in a wider context and as embedded in an ongoing social process.[94] On the one hand, personal and social experiences become ritualised, and on the other hand, ritualisation evaporates in people's ongoing concerns and lives.

The *muruntika*

Before the 1950s or dating further back, Tiwi performed a ceremony called *muruntika* at the beginning of the wet season, when the grass started to shoot. In about three days, women processed the ripened fruits of the cycads (*minta*) by roasting them, cracking the nuts, and letting running water swill the poisonous substances out. The mash of the prepared cycad fruits (*kwoka*) was then put in large bark baskets. These baskets were lined up on forked sticks in camp, and the men performed *muruntika*-songs.[95] My informants described the *muruntika* as preceding the *kulama*, the seasonal yam rituals following the ceremonial preparation of the cycad fruits.[96] I was told the *kulama* in the past lasted longer than the final ritual event still carried out by at least a number of weeks; some said a month or more (cf. Hart & Pilling 1960: 40). The *muruntika* was held when the grass began to grow again in the beginning of the wet season; in contrast, the *kulama* was performed when the grass was tall and dry, ready to burn off at the close of this season. In other words, the two rituals punctuated the wet season (*paketringa*).

In pre-settlement life the wet season seemed to have been a much more troublesome time than the dry months. The snake-infested tall grass restricted people's movements and prevented a number of hunting activities. People lived in close quarters. Conflicts were likely to arise, as were suspicions and detection of adulterous affairs ('in the long grass' is still a euphemism for illicit sex). It also happened to be a time of sicknesses. Elderly people who had lived under these conditions said this was the case. The wet season was still perceived as a time when sickness (*tarni*), boils and chest infections (*tiukuputji*) in particular, 'come up'. I propose, from what we know, that the *muruntika* was concerned with securing food for the wet season. I was told that baskets with the prepared mash of cycad fruits were hung in the trees and lasted as food for a maximum of six months. People could rely on the *kwoka* as a staple food during the time there was somewhat less variety in the foods available. The *kulama*, I would like to suggest, made sense in dealing with the problems that arose in the wet: ill feelings, grievances, conflicts, sicknesses, and deaths. It might be seen as a purification ritual, in a broad sense, of the Tiwi people involved and their environments.

The *kulama* ritual

A Tiwi myth tells about the first times the *kulama* was performed at places called Tetrwunga and Imalanu and led by Purikikini, a mythological owl (cf. Mountford 1958: 123-4; Osborne 1974: 87-9; Brandl 1970: 467; Grau 1983: 141-2). A number of mythological birds (owls, eagles, and a pelican) and animals participated in the *kulama*. The ritual was copied by the *ningawi*, small spirits living in the mangroves. I was told by two fully initiated men, Isaac and Jerome Pamantari, the *ningawi* were speared during the *kulama*. One of the *ningawi* 'went in the water, finished [death]'. Afterwards 'he was spit out in all directions'. They also mentioned the presence of Ajipa, 'half-Tiwi, bit like gorilla'. 'People (*tiwi*) went after him,

he took that woman from Tiwi'. Female informants told me Tiwi men had robbed women from the *ningawi*, described as spirits half a man's height, but then found out these women were different. They laughed about those men who tried to have sex with them. Simon Pamantari and Tobias Arapi, contradicting Mountford (1958: 124), told me stories of how they had met with *ningawi*. In the mangroves these spirits lived off raw whelks (*paranga*) and could be heard at a distance cracking the shells, a sound remarkably similar to that of the clapsticks used in the *kulama*. I was told, however, that Tipetuipuni, an owl, 'was holding the sticks, that is why we use them'. A man named Tipungwuti was credited with having adopted the *kulama* ritual from the *ningawi* and with introducing its annual performance into Tiwi society (cf. Brandl 1971: 467). His patrilineal descendants have the *kulama* yam and the *ningani* as their dreaming. They also used to perform a dance depicting the *ningawi*. In the *kulama* ritual some references were made to the mythological beings who carried out the first performances of the ritual and laid down its outline. Jerome stated, 'This *kulama* business grew out. One month no shower. They grab one young boy, grab him. Then paint him with turtle or stingray's fat, red paint. One month no *moluki* (bath), only paint. We try to do it again but nobody interested.' Five months after this statement he nevertheless instructed his (somewhat older) brother-in-law during this person's further initiation in the *kulama*.

Every *kulama* had a 'boss', the most senior man, who made the decisions concerning time and place of the ritual. Simon Pamantari and Jack Munuluka were the 'bosses' of the *kulama* in Pularumpi and Nguiu respectively. Months in advance, men who planned to participate in the yam ritual were composing and practising their songs. The songs, especially made for the occasion, ought not to be communicated to others. *Kulama* men did, however, confide the contents of their best songs to me. Isaac Pamantari and Sam Kerimerini even performed a newly composed *kulama* song in the Social Club. Under the guise of drunkenness Sam as well as Isaac stated to have been falsely accused of having killed Tobias. Simon had composed an *ajipa*-song (to be performed during the *ajipa*, the highlight of the *kulama* because of the complexity of the songs at this phase) about two wives he had to send away out of respect for his first wife, who was sick and kept fighting them. 'That's why it's a little bit hard, you know, for those young people', he said, 'but we try to have two this year.' The two men he pointed out did not participate. Simon's statement suggests not only the language and style of singing but also the contents posed a problem for newcomers to the *kulama*. Most of the *kulama* men were considered 'big-headed'; these people made sharp observations and were able to express themselves with striking and highly complex metaphors. The composition of *kulama*-songs challenged people's artistic and intellectual powers, and at the same time they had to have the guts to bring out all kinds of 'trouble'. Keen social observations were often combined with humour.[97] Not all the initiated men performed in the *kulama* annually. Tobias said he had to have 'a reason' to do the *kulama*. In Pularumpi four men 'missed out' in 1988.

The next year two of them took part and the two others did not. Isaac, who neither performed the *kulama* in 1988 nor in 1989, did so in 1990 because his 'brother' Bill Pamantari had died. Simon said, 'old people [senior people in the past] didn't rubbish *kulama*.' Even when they were blind or could not walk, and were very old, they were taken to the ceremonial ground and sang, according to him. Sam, although considered 'deaf', was said to have never missed a *kulama*. People said he was 'backed up' by Nancy, who composed the songs for him.

Ideally, the yam ritual was performed at the close of the wet season. The 'boss' decided when the ritual would be held but there were various indicators of the appropriate time. The call of the frogmouth bird (*kukuwini*), 'kuku', indicated the *kulama* yams had ripened. When the sky began to colour red in the evenings, according to Sam, it was about '*kulama* time'. Simon tested the grass to see if it would burn to set the time for his yam ritual.[98] When possible the ritual would be performed by strong moonlight. Another concern was that there had to be enough bush and sea foods for the people taking part in the *kulama*. The ritual was frequently scheduled on the weekend following a payday. The 'bosses' committed themselves not to drink beer during the ritual. The 'boss' made his decision known in the Social Club a few days before the ritual would take place.

Simon used to harpoon a turtle a few days before his *kulama* to secure sufficient meat. Children, grandchildren and other relatives provided the people in the *kulama* camp with food (steaks, mangrove worms, fish, and so forth). Simon bought a brand-new cassette recorder, 'ordered from Darwin', to tape the *kulama*-songs. Jack, another *kulama* 'boss', recorded songs too. The songs they were taping were those of the first night, 'the night of sorrow', and the *ajipa*. These were the songs they had studied for a long time. Afterwards, they copied the cassette tapes and passed them to people who liked to hear the new songs. Jerome's son Reuben frequently listened to his father's songs on tape. He told me he did so because he wanted to learn to sing in his father's style. Following Tobias' death, Simon erased the tape he had of his 1988 *kulama* because the voices of Tobias and Marylou were on it and these had become taboo. A ceremonial ground had to be selected (see below). In the past, I was told, the yam ritual was always held at the beach. The camp had to be organised, with firewood collected, shades erected, and mattresses and blankets brought to the camp.

Previously, according to my informants, the men went about three miles into the bush and stayed there for one week, 'no more women there, only men'.[99] During the *kulama*, also at the end of the 1980s, the men were not allowed to 'sleep with missus on one blanket'. They were *pukamani* and had to refrain from intercourse, 'fire in the middle, cannot touch her, that's the Law', said Simon, 'we are single men for three nights and three days.' Harney and Elkin state the men in the *kulama* could not touch their wives and children because their polluting sweat (*kilimini*) would cause death

(1943: 232).[100] They painted themselves up and did not wear clothes, except a loincloth, even when it was cold at night or raining.

Just before the 1989 *kulama* in Pularumpi, Jerome and Reuben went out to get mangrove worms. The *kulama* men had to rub these worms on their bodies, and should have, so I was told, used the sap of the milkwood tree in a similar way (cf. Spencer 1914: 94). Nancy and Jeanette gathered *muranga* yams, wrapped these in paperbark, and hid the yams behind a tree at some distance from the *kulama* camp. In Nguiu, these long and thin yams, white when peeled, were substituted by slices of white bread.

The first night (*purimikuwalumili*) was conceived of as particularly dangerous. Children (but see Goodale 1971: 187) and pregnant women or women with babies had to be kept away from the *kulama* camp. The men painted their bodies with red ochres, the colour associated with danger, blood, revenge, and mourning. The threat came from a spiritual entity, called Merakati, who caused sickness, and from the life-threatening presence of the spirits of the dead. At the close of the wet season the wind blew around the seeds of the tall spear grass (*merakati*). These seeds pierced the body and were said to bring sickness. Mountford was told the time for the yam ritual had come when 'the tall, annual grass was about to shed its seed' (1958: 130). Pilling notes that Merakati would punish violators of the rules and taboos during the *kulama*, especially the initial phases until the clearing of the ceremonial ground. Sickness and death resulted from the prickly seeds of the spear grass. Such a seed was called *impirni*, 'he who injures or kills [me]' (1958: 159-62).[101] What we have here, I would like to suggest, is a symbolic killing. I was told Merekati acted upon illicit behaviour and was given the concrete example that when sweethearts associated in the long grass, *merekati* would be pricking its seeds into their backs.

At dusk, the ritual began with a prescribed dialogue between the women and the men, also recorded by Grau: 'They are coming!'; 'Who?'; 'Murderers (*kwampi*)!'; 'We will fight them!' (1983: 195). The men lined up in the open space in the middle of the camp. The living and the dead were perceived as being very close at this time. In the Old Camp at Pularumpi the men directed themselves towards the scene of the killing; at Myilly Point in Nguiu they faced Tobias' grave at the other side of the Apsley Strait. The men lifted their arms, spat, and threw burning twigs in that direction. They repeated this in all directions of the compass while calling out, '*kwai-kwai-kwai-hoo-hoo*'. When asked they said it was about 'fighting business' and 'chasing devils [spirits of the dead] away'; this fire-throwing was intended to stop the fighting. The men and, thereafter, the women called out, 'Where they are fighting!' (*kapiurukwupari*). One of the participants explained to me, 'They are pushing all the people in the war and make them die. This *kulama* tries to stop them from making fights.'

After this ritual episode the men went back to their campfires but sat down apart from the women. The men took turns in singing in the middle of

the ceremonial ground. The singer first hummed at his campfire, putting the words of his song in the right order and metre ('line 'em up'). Then he stood up, sang aloud while walking around in the ceremonial ground and beating time with two clubs. The song was repeated by women married or closely related to the performer at their campfires. Mourning songs ended in wailing.

The *kulama*-songs of various types were performed in a particular style, in which the use of special words and the clubs were characteristic features. The rest of the night was designated as 'the time we are lying down' (cf. Goodale 1971: 185; Brandl 1971: 250). This lying down seemed to be associated with sleeping, dreaming, and death (in contrast to standing up). The men performed songs about grief or sorrow (*putuputu*), grievances, worries, and complaints they had, and songs about gossip and false accusations or 'talk about rubbish'. Most prominent were the mourning songs about the deceased of the past year. Hence my informants also spoke about 'the night of sorrow'. In this context people used the appropriate mortuary kinship terms (cf. chapter 5, Table 1). A number of other bereaved came to the camp to listen to these songs. The performer concluded his song in wailing and hit himself with a club. The singing women and the audience cried and wailed with the performer in unison. The song performances, with intervals, went on until after midnight, as more and more people fell asleep and the songs, so to speak, ran out of stock.

The next morning each man made a sharpened digging stick (*arlukuni*) out of mangrove wood, similar to a child's toy spear. The digging sticks were painted with red ochres.

The men ate the roasted *muranga* yams, hidden by the women the previous day, or white bread instead. They lined up again in the middle of the ceremonial ground and put pieces of these yams in their mouths. As in the ritual they began the previous night, they spat yam in four directions. This ritual action was repeated with water as well.[102] The water was said to clear the voice (*muraka*, also throat) in the same way as the presentation of water to the bereaved after a death. This ritual of spitting the yams and water seemed to be an inversion of the ritual of throwing fire: both were said to drive evil spirits away and to stop the fighting. It terminated the period of exceptional danger. After this, children were allowed to come into the camp.

The men sat down and employed two little sticks to clean their ears. Then they put these twigs upright into the earth (cf. Mountford 1958: 133); therewith, one man said, the 'trouble' they had dealt with was 'finished' (the action seems analogous to the putting of a sapling at both ends of the grave mound). In Hart's notes on a yam ritual the men said, 'Leave 'em there' (1928/29).[103] I was told the ritual cleansing of the ears enabled them to hear sneak attackers (*kwampi*) approaching (cf. Grau 1983: 164). Hart states, 'The idea is that if you do this you plenty savvy [understand] you see

nighttime, you will detect anybody sneaken along you, you no more forget anything etc.' (ibid.).

Next the male participants painted themselves with white pipeclay to resemble Purikikini, the mythological owl who carried out the first *kulama*. While painting, having daubed their fingers in the paint, they again lifted their arms. With the right hand they put the clay on their right eye, with the left hand on the left eye. So they went on to paint the hair on their heads, shoulders, upper arms and chest; Hart (1928/29) observed them also painting their pubic hair. Goodale writes that paint would protect them against sickness and gave bodily strength and good eyesight (1971: 189-90).

One by one, the men took a bucket, substituting for the bark basket of earlier times, and lifted it above their shoulders. Each man faced towards his dreaming places and ancestral graves, directed the bucket, and tapped the bottom, calling out '*pooh*'. This ritual, as an element of the seasonal marking of the beginning of the dry season, was said to ensure the return of rain (*paketringa*) and thunder (*pumerali*) (cf. Grau 1983: 164, but see Brandl 1971: 263).

The men left the camp, walking single-file to the jungle nearby in order to collect the *kulama* yams. There they dug out the yams with their sticks, taking the utmost care not to break any of the hairy roots, as damage to the *kulama* yams would produce sickness. The diggers quietly spoke to the personalized yams to 'awaken' them (cf. Goodale 1971: 190-1; Brandl 1971: 263). One 'boss' told me the removal of the rather large quantity of *kulama* yams would cause rains in his country, the district where his grandfather had been buried. The men walked back toward the camp as they had come, taking turns carrying the bucket of yams on their shoulders.

In the neigbourhood of the *kulama* camp, the men hid the bucket of yams behind a tree and covered it with tall grass stalks. Then there was a break until late afternoon.

At that time the *kulama* men renewed the white paint on their bodies. They took their digging sticks and hit the ground in the centre of the camp, calling out '*hoi-hoi-hoi*'. In Pularumpi the men encircled the ceremonial ground and went on their knees and forehands to the middle while making the sounds of a dingo and scratching the earth. They did so, I was told, because the dingo was the dreaming of the eldest man in the *kulama*, Tobias' 'brother' Sam Kerimini.

Then they cleared the ground of grass (now all kinds of grass were called *merakati*, according to Pilling 1958: 161), stones, leaves, and so forth. With their digging sticks -- the men in Nguiu used a shovel as a substitute -- they made a large circle of a low mound of sand, scraped away from the inside. In the middle of this ceremonial ring (*milimika*) they shaped a small circle by putting saplings of half a man's height upright in the earth. This '*kulama* oven' was then filled more than halfway with pieces of firewood. When this was accomplished they walked in each other's footsteps, counter-clockwise around the oven and performed songs that had cleansing as their theme.

After dark the men moved to the tree outside the camp where the yams had been buried under grass. I was instructed we had to sneak up and be silent because the spirits of the dead were near. The yams were 'speared' with stalks of spear grass. They put a bucket of water next to the one with the yams; the yams were uncovered and put in water. We splashed our faces and bodies with this water. Then the yams were covered up again, and the men went back to the ceremonial ground.

Following the ritual bath the second night (*apurigianaga*) the men could sing about anything, 'whatever you think'. A conventional subject to sing about was a boat (used as a metaphor for people). Then the men, one performer in the ring at a time, sang about their mothers-in-law. As mentioned before, this was an avoidance relationship, so the men referred to her by touching their own shoulder with one club and of course used metaphors instead of speaking directly. The male performer stressed he was the one who had or had to have her daughter as his wife. Finally they sang about their children, mentioning their names. Although these children were adults, the performers described them as children competing (e.g., swimming, dancing, or running on the beach).

The following morning the men put pieces of red ant-bed on top of the firewood in the *kulama* oven. While they were doing this they sang about (male) wild honey bees: 'they are going in' (*talingei*). Tiwi used to make this observation of the bees moving in their nests high up in the trees by lifting their hand facing the sun and looking through their fingers. Where they going in, one could find sugar bag (Australian-English for wild honey) in abundance. Wild honey could also be found in ant-beds, of which pieces were put between the surrounding stems high up in the oven. One man in Pularumpi sang about himself as a sugar bag fly going into the tree and making a lot of honey there. Goodale reports the men in a 1954 *kulama* said, 'We are here, mother-in-law' (1971: 195). The stems holding together the pile of firewood were referred to as mother-in-law (*amprinua*, cf. Brandl 1971: 263). A common metaphor in singing about the mother-in-law was climbing up the branches of a tree (which in turn stood for the shoulder). When put in the earth oven later, the yams, treated as people, will be transformed. As Goodale points out,

> The yam has many fine rootlets resembling whiskers, and is referred to by the men in masculine terms as "the big boss of the country." As the ritual preparation proceeds however, the yam becomes feminine. The men refer to it as daughter as they place it in the ceremonial oven, called its mother, for cooking (1982: 207).

The fire in the oven was lit. The male performers could sing about setting on fire sleeping places (windbreaks, paperbark blankets) of their 'mother's brothers', pretending to be spirit children, because the 'mother's brothers' would not give them women, and about setting on fire the blankets and clothes of unfaithful women (their 'mother's brother's daughters'). In other words, they sang about 'woman trouble', about not getting the wives they

claimed to be entitled to. In this context they could also sing about a spirit called *jamparipari*.[104]

Then the men painted their bodies with red ochres in resemblance to Tiringini, the mythological red-backed sea eagle who with Purikikini took part in the first *kulama*.

With twigs from the fire the men burned their body hair on their arms and legs as well as their pubic hair. They shaved their beards off or pulled them out.

After this depilation the men acted as women, namely their 'sisters' with whom they had a grandparent in common (*aminiatuwi*) but of a different 'mother' (matriclan, *imunga*). They pretended they were these 'sisters', dead or alive, mentioned the women's names as theirs, used their high-pitched voices (female style of singing), postured and moved like them. The men stressed their attractiveness towards men, for instance, in depicting and singing about the way they walked, 'showing off'. Sometimes men combed their hair and made ponytails. The great artist Declan Apuatimi, I was told, performed with a handbag and on high heels. These performances were taken to be humorous by the audience; especially the women portrayed would roar with laughter.

Next the men left the *kulama* camp and returned with the bucket of yams. Each man walked around the oven with the bucket on his shoulder and then passed it on to the next man. They sang about a successful hunt and collecting plenty of tasty foods. The bucket with yams was placed next to the fire. Paperbark, and in Nguiu cardboard as a substitute, was laid on top of the bucket. One man had made a ring of the long, green stalks of spear grass that previously covered the yams. This ring of grass was called *tapara*, the moon. In a popular Tiwi myth Tapara offered to bring Purukupali's son back to life within three days, but Purukupali declared that because his son had died all people would have to die (cf. chapter 5). Tapara or the moon might be seen as a symbol of regeneration, taken from the waning and waxing of the moon. The ring was put against the bucket with yams. Two digging sticks had been thrust into the earth of the ceremonial ring, one on each side just in front of the bucket. A handful of powdered red ochres was strewn on the floor of the ceremonial ring.

They performed mourning songs again about the deceased of the past year. Before the *kulama*, Nancy Kerimerini told me the names of the persons who had killed Tobias would be mentioned at this stage, 'when fire'. Afterwards, she volunteered that to her disgust no names, nothing (*kalikamini*), had been mentioned. Roger Imalu, Tobias' classificatory father, who would have to do so had only spoken of 'shit-people' instead. Songs of revenge could be sung at this stage.

When the fire had burnt down the men threw the leftover firewood away in the direction of their countries, the locations of their ancestral burial sites, where they were supposed to go later on to burn the tall grass. The ashes were cleared with small green boughs. Spencer notes 'the idea of this being to cleanse it of all evil influence--if this were not done they

believe the evil would go inside them and they would break out all over with sores' (1914: 101). Water from the bucket with yams was splashed on the hot embers, leaving a bottom of hot pieces of ant-bed. The men called out '*brr brr*', which, according to Spencer, 'is a cry indicating both defiance and the fact that, in any contest, the men making it are winning' (ibid.: 95). This call belonged to the shark dance and represented the shark chasing its prey. The ring of grass, the 'full moon', was placed on the embers. The yams were put within the ring and covered with paperbark. With their digging sticks the men dug away sand around the oven and put it on top of the paperbark. The resulting mound functioned as an earth oven. The men sat on their heels, patted the mound, and shook their bodies in resemblance of Alipiura, the mythological pelican, shaking its feathers when coming out of the water.[105] Again they made a call similar to the one mentioned above. I was told it was the sound of the pelican, and this call in a somewhat higher voice and repeated faster indeed is a feature of the pelican dance.

While the yams were in the earth oven the men performed an old song taken from the mortuary rituals and had their 'children' dancing. In the 1989 *kulama* at Nguiu, Tobias' children danced with spears, denoting both spirit children and sneak attackers.

Next the men sang, in *kulama* style again, about food while the yams were being prepared in the oven. They sang, for instance, that the bell was ringing because dinner was ready, an allusion to the meals they used to have in a canteen near the mission dormitories a few decades earlier. Other subjects were the roasting of bush foods and the table being laid for a dinner in a restaurant.

After about an hour in the oven the yams were dug out. These were laid on the paperbark, peeled, and sliced. The men mixed the soft yam with red ochres into a mash and rubbed it onto their bodies. Special attention was given to rub the mash on the joints and the eyes. This treatment was supposed to give strength, I was told, so the men would not break their limbs while hunting and would retain good eyesight. Also women rubbed the mash on their heads, eyes, chest, arms and legs. The men gave their little children and grandchildren a similar treatment. Children who had trouble walking were brought to the camp to have their knees rubbed with the processed *kulama* yams.

The men started to prepare themselves for the *ajipa*, the highlight of the *kulama*. Until then the body paintings had been monochrome, either in red or white. For this phase of the *ajipa* they used all four colours: yellow, red, white and black. The faces were painted in striking designs. The initiate in the 1989 *kulama* at Pularumpi had his face painted in yellow and black by his brother-in-law, his instructor. This time he was allowed only to sing a single song during the *aijpa*, while the others performed at least three songs. During the *ajipa* the men could show they were 'big-headed' (skilled composers, or as Tiwi say, 'songwriters') for the singing at this stage was considered extremely difficult. They could make use of a wide range of subjects but often their compositions of unusual length stressed remarkable

and memorable events of the past year. Brandl notes that 'subjects external to the indigenous culture were incorporated in the subject matter' (1970: 476). This has been evident in Spencer's and later detailed accounts of the yam ritual. The *ajipa*-song texts in Hart's fieldnotes show that the people he stayed with in bush camps in the northern part of Bathurst Island ('little affected as yet by the outside influences', Hart & Pilling 1960: 53) were very familiar with town life in Darwin at the end of the 1920s. Among the subject matters were aeroplanes, the railway station, a gramophone, bicycles, an architect's plans, a film showing; all these things were fitted in with strikingly keen observations (Hart 1928/29). Isaac performed for me his first *ajipa*-song, dating from about 1942. The song text told of a battle between submarines and bombers north of Melville Island from the perspective of the crews inside them.[106] Like 'the night of sorrow' the *aijpa* drew a larger audience than other parts of the ritual. The 'bosses' recorded these songs, popular for a long time after the *kulama*, on tape too.

They further had to sing about their 'fathers' and their relationship to them.

The *kulama* yams were put in the bucket with water again. Then a dreaming dance of the eldest man participating was performed. In Pularumpi we performed the mullet dance, depicting the mullet fish jumping out of the water. The mullet was an important dreaming of Sam and the late Tobias. The bucket with the yams was then brought back to the tree where it had been hidden before. The yams were left behind to soak in the water.

Finally the *kulama* men performed an eye (*pitjara*) song, so they would have good eyes, I was told, to detect sneak attackers or other enemies in the following year.

First thing the next morning, the men took the remaining pieces of ant-bed from the oven and threw these at a tree. This ritual action seemed to be a kind of oracle. If they hit the tree, so they explained, it ensured that they would have game for the coming year.[107] If not, they would just have 'bad luck' (cf. Goodale 1971: 204). Pieces of ant-bed were also placed against the large ring of sand encircling the ceremonial ground. This practice was said to guarantee the collection of food in abundance in one's country, from the land's surface and in the swamps, until the next *kulama*.

After this the men could sing about the spirit (*imanka*). In Pularumpi the people left the camp because of heavy rainfall. Simon later performed the *imanka*-song he had planned to sing for me. In Nguiu the 'boss' broke off the ritual early in the morning, saying he gave up because his own children had refused to dance on the previous day. To my knowledge no one, neither in Pularumpi nor in Nguiu, ate directly from the yams that had been left in the water, although several people told me they would do so later on.[108] Therewith the *kulama* ritual was finished.

Discussion

When reading the available accounts of the *kulama* ritual, and taking notice of my own observations in addition, one might be 'struck by the fact that in the sequence of ritual events there has been no significant change' (Goodale 1971: 213) during the twentieth century. As in the mortuary rituals a script or central narrative appears to be followed. I was even more struck by the creativity of the participants in linking these conventional ritual events with their own stories and personal experiences put in metaphorical language and action. As Turner suggests, 'the more complex the ritual (many symbols, complex vehicles), the more particularistic, localized, and socially structured its message' (1973: 1102). The multivocal symbols employed have reference to the cosmological identities and the concrete social lives of the participants. Many messages happened to be esoteric and difficult to grasp without interpretation. This seemed to be part of the intellectual game. The intimate knowledge of the lives and cosmological connections of others would often do to infer the hidden meanings of a particular performance, but sometimes the performer was asked for an explanation. Turner states, 'since a ritual symbol may represent disparate, even contradictory themes, the gain in economy may be offset by a loss in clarity of communication. This would be inevitable if such symbols existed in a vacuum, but they exist in cultural and operational contexts that to some extent overcome the loss in intelligibility and to some extent capitalize on it' (1973: 1101). The participants in the *kulama*, of course, had an intimate knowledge of each other and the world they shared. They gave a rather esoteric meaning (because few people could properly understand the songs) in their songs (e.g., to a piece of iron on the beach) that said little to others who did not understand what the hidden meaning was. Often the songs had layers of meaning. Sometimes other participants expressed to a singer that they understood, sometimes they asked for an explanation and were given a clue, then applauded the performer when they realised it made sense. Much could be understood from the context, the part of the ritual in which a song was performed. A person who employed complex metaphors was considered 'big-headed' or a 'good songwriter' (*jerengapuranti* for a male, and *jintingapuranti* for a female). As mentioned before, the *kulama* ritual provided an arena in which people could express themselves without hesitation; when frightened or insecure the singer.was encouraged by the audience. Goodale formulates it as follows: '[the yam ritual] is a time of ceremonial truce, and the singer's words go unchallenged. What he might not have the courage to say at other times, he may now say without fear' (1971: 188). Rethorical devices such as the use of other people's voices, dead or alive, and the ambiguity resulting from the esoteric multilayered meanings, of course added to the protection of the performer. The ritual knowledge gave these people prestige in Tiwi society. They acted as the 'bosses' in the mortuary rituals and in this way many people who wanted to have memorable and prestigeous rituals were dependent on them. The

exclusiveness of the yam rituals as a result of the difficulties in acquiring the special skills needed for participation in the rituals enabled these people to obtain influence and prestige (see also Keen 1977). The ritual performances and songs had more 'powers' (cf. Von Sturmer 1987) in its cosmological and social implications: to maintain and to regenerate the Tiwi world, to promote health, to mark transitions in people's lives and seasonal change, to (re)define identities and relationships, to argue a case, and so forth. Tobias Arapi described the yam ritual to me as 'fighting with words'. As we have seen, all kinds of 'trouble' (*nemara*, also 'talk' and 'meeting') could be dealt with. Tiwi referred in this context to the concept of *ngirramini*, meaning 'word, talk, trouble, and argument'.

The symbols or signs in Aboriginal ritual, as Stanner points out, are not only indicative but also considered effacious: '[p]ower over the signs is productive of their objects', hence what we see is 'the deepening and the refining of the analogical perception' (1989: 121). In the *kulama* ritual the *kulama* yams are the main symbolic vehicle for quite a number of transformations. To the surface then comes a mediation between, among others, the following binary oppositions:

dangerous nature	salutary culture
toxic, inedible yam	strength-giving, edible yam
death, killing	life, rebirth
sickness	health
uninitated children	initiated adults
conflicts/grievances	peaceful relationships
bad luck	good luck/success/prosperity
reliance on staple food	food in abundance
wet season	dry season

The linkages of parallel transformations are equally important. For instance, the clearing and burning of hairy roots, body hair, and tall, dry grass (roots-hair-grass) connects yams, people, and country. The regenerative power coming from the ritual transformation of the yams induces similar powers into people and their countries or ancestral lands, and vice versa. We have here interrelations of nurturing properties of food in general,[109] human reproductive and productive capacities, and environmental regeneration.

From Spencer's account (1914: 92-110) follows a close association between the yams and the initiates. Both were treated in a similar way: 'captured', 'buried' under bark, symbolically speared, depilated, soaked in water, 'dug out', and so on. A symbolic killing and rebirth was applied to both yams and initiates (cf. Goodale 1971: 222), and is characteristic of rites of passage in which symbolic death and rebirth mark transitions (Hertz 1960; Van Gennep 1960). Death was an important theme in the yam ritual during the first night until the clearing of the ceremonial ground on the second day, when the yams were hidden at the base of a tree overnight, and when the fire was burning down on the third day. Initiates started performing in postfuneral rituals, corresponding with the initiation of the

spirits of the deceased into the world of the dead. Recent spirits of the dead were supposed to come to the *kulama* ritual. The theme of death was prominently emphasised by the mourning songs and expressions of grief during the first night, 'the night of sorrow'. Previous *kulama*-songs could be used in the mortuary rituals intended to direct the spirits of the deceased to the world of the dead. The earth oven, a mound in which the yams were 'buried', was associated with the grave mound.[110] My informants claimed they were cured of illnesses and recovered at their ancestral graves, those of 'grandfathers' in particular. They asked their ancestors' assistance in hunting in their countries, which the descendants could claim on the basis of the presence of those graves. We have seen how the participants in the yam ritual paid attention to their countries (including the patrilineal ancestors and dreamings), where after the *kulama* the grass would be burned. In a number of ways the mortuary rituals and the yam ritual might be seen as complementary in relating the spiritual world and the world of the embodied living.

A significant attribute of the *kulama* yam as a ritual symbol is its condensation, as Turner points out, as 'many ideas, relations between things, actions, interactions, and transactions are represented simultaneously by the symbol vehicle (the ritual use of such a vehicle abridges what would verbally be a lengthy statement or argument)' (1973: 1100).[111] Spencer notes, 'The island natives evidently regard the *kolamma*, probably because it has to be specially treated before being safe to eat, as a superior kind of yam, endowed with properties such as ordinary yams do not possess' (1914: 103). Goodale (1982), following Ortner, regards the *kulama* yam as a key symbol which links the resources of food and people. I think this is a very fruitful approach.[112] We have seen above how the ritual treatment of the *kulama* yam structures and ties together many things, not only laid down in the more or less fixed ritual procedure but also to be extended by the contributions of the participants, which generate new meanings.

I see the symbolic role of the *kulama* yam mainly as a vehicle bringing forth transformations. The transitions do not necessarily entail person-person relationships but may be of a subject-object-subject type (cf. Stanner 1989; Munn 1970). As I said earlier, people in Nguiu on Bathurst Island sometimes substituted potatoes for the *kulama* yams. This shows that the symbolical properties are not inherent in the *kulama* yams; considered effacious instead are the symbolic connections (metaphors) and analogies. Perhaps potatoes could stand for the *kulama* yams (and white bread or damper for *muranga* yams) because these were introduced by the missionaries and were initially exotic in Tiwi society. Kantilla and his patrilineal descendants, calling themselves Nguiuwila or 'people from Nguiu', closely identified with the Catholic mission and its products. Edible roots like potatoes, pigs, coconuts, and cashew and mango fruits (introduced by the Catholic missionaries) are their dreamings (cf. Brandl 1971: 140). Thus the potato replacing the *kulama* yam might have been chosen for its cosmological significance to the people concerned.

6.3 The yam rituals in 1989

Elderly people often spoke to me about the *kulama*, their previous and new songs, and what would happen in the ritual. In the wet season, Tobias' 'mother' (FW) Martha Arapi, frequently performed *kulama* songs just before the torrential rains. People said her singing caused the rain.[113] Like Tobias, she wanted me to record her songs, composed by her former husbands, on tape. In one session she asked me to get her 'son' Sam Kerimerini, for she had 'copied' in *kulama* style a widower song for his wife in hospital that he had performed for my wife and I. Skilled singers had to hear such an intricate song only once to be able to perform it, even after lengthy periods of time. They had stored virtually hundreds of songs in their memories (cf. Berndt 1950). It is hard to put into words people's pleasure in performing well-composed songs. The language used was an esoteric one, mainly in style and wording (cf. Hart 1930; Brandl 1970). Certain words reflected the type of song, the stage in a particular ritual, and an emotion. Messages and grievances voiced in the *kulama* songs would reach the persons for whom they were intended (Pilling 1958). In the late twentieth century these significant songs were also transmitted via cassette tapes, for relatively few people were able to 'copy' (re-enact) these themselves and pass them on.

At the monthly meetings of the Tiwi Land Council, Jack Munuluka and Simon Pamantari sat down together and exchanged old stories and *kulama* songs. Between them they developed a plan to organise a joint *kulama* on a large scale. Simon wanted besides the men from Pularumpi and Nguiu his elder brother Theodore from Milikapiti to take part as well. According to their plans the 1989 yam ritual, dedicated to Tobias, would be held in the Old Camp at Pularumpi. The ceremonial ground would be under the mango tree where Tobias was supposed to have been killed. In this *kulama*, they said, it would come out who had killed him. Nothing came of the initial plans. Jack dropped the idea. He told me he had hoped people at Pularumpi, and his 'relations' in particular, would tell him who had killed his 'son' Tobias. From then on he avoided visits to Pularumpi as much as he could. Jack said he could not make a telephone call to the health clinic or council office in Pularumpi because of the 'trouble there' but that he would find some way to let me know when his *kulama* at Nguiu would take place.

In the wet season of 1988-1989 five yam rituals were held. Tobias' 'brother' (*ingkalipini*, FWHS) Steven Tampajani had carried out the ritual on his own at Nguiu in October 1988. The other *kulama* men considered this 'too early'. Jack said to Steven it was 'a shame' for it was extremely dangerous to perform the *kulama* alone; it would provoke sickness and death. In February 1989, Tobias' son-in-law Theodore Pamantari and Dimitri Papuruluwi had their *kulama* in Milikapiti. Theodore composed the following song of revenge (*karinimawatumingumi*) concerning the killing of

Tobias (I cite his translation): 'Why that man?/Where is that killer, where that murderman?/Where is the man who killed the old man?/We want to see him, and belt him, and topple-back him/He was lucky white police went there/We wanted to have a fight there and flog him.' Theodore expressed his anger about Tobias' violent death. He suggested police intervention prevented Tobias' family from laying their hands on 'the man who killed the old man'. In mid-May, Edgar Tapalinga and Trevor Kiringarra held a *kulama* in Nguiu. Trevor was the present leader of the Tikalaula, the people from the country Tikelaru. Minapini had been banned from this country. Tobias' children held Trevor in part responsible for their father's death because as a consequence of Minapini's fate he had also been expelled from his country Tikelaru, and had not been able to seek refuge there. In one of his songs Trevor complained he had been falsely accused. People had been talking behind his back. Trevor growled that it had been Tobias' own fault. He wanted to go to Pularumpi. That he had been killed there proved it was a dangerous place for him, a place where he did not belong. Tikelaru consisted of a number of districts; Minapini had been banned from the district Tangio or Arapi. In his 'talk about' song (*purakutukuntinga*) Trevor stated he had never said Tobias was not allowed to stay in his district Tuwalakri: 'You fellow father [Tobias], he run away from here/I didn't say anything about our country Tuwalakri. You wanted that place [Pularumpi] and you died there/That's a wrong place!' Tobias told me, however, it hurt him and his father that they could not go back to their country.

Steven Tampajani performed his *kulama* shortly before Tobias' death. The references made to his death in two other yam rituals I have cited above. In the two other *kulama* rituals Tobias' fate was dealt with much more extensively. These two rituals dedicated to him will be discussed below.

For a long period of time it seemed Isaac Pamantari would take part in the *kulama* at Pularumpi. He was well aware that people had raised suspicions against him. Isaac had prepared a number of songs already. One of these, a 'talk about' song, he revealed when in a state of drunkenness in the Social Club. It was a song full of swearing words stating he had been wrongly blamed. Simon was determined to have his *kulama* in the Old Camp when the time came to do it. Several times he checked whether the grass would burn but found out it was 'too wet'. Then, finally, he scheduled the *kulama* for the last weekend of March. On the Friday they were to start, Kevin Wangiti suddenly turned up in Pularumpi; after five months in Darwin's Berrimah jail he had been released on bail. The event appeared significant enough to postpone the yam ritual. Kevin's release drove home the problem of who had killed Tobias. I was told the names would be mentioned in the *kulama*. When he was intoxicated, Sam Kerimerini broke the rule mentioned earlier in making a song of his public in the Social Club. Sam stated he had been falsely accused of having killed his 'brother'. Simon definitely decided on having his *kulama* a fortnight after Kevin's return. Alec Adranango and Isaac Pamantari said they perhaps would perform

another *kulama* later on. The latter was teased at the Club because he had changed his mind. Throughout the ceremony in the Old Camp he did not come into the *kulama* camp but remained sitting at a hearing distance. Jack Munuluka would have his yam ritual in Nguiu five weeks later, but first I turn to the *kulama* held in Pularumpi.

6.4 The *kulama* in the Old Camp (Pularumpi, Melville Island)

On Friday afternoon, April the 14th, preparations had been made for the *kulama* to be held in Pularumpi. The site chosen for the ritual was not the place where Tobias' body had been found but an old ceremonial ground where Tobias and Marylou had participated in the *kulama* the previous year.

Simon had everything organised in camp. It was dark when the others returned from the Social Club. Sam told me to make more light. He whispered there was a spirit of the dead around. Edmund Pamantari and his 'brother-in-law' Jerome were lying down with a campfire in between them. Roger Imalu had been followed by his wife Vanessa and his girlfriend Melanie Wangiti. The five men mentioned would perform the *kulama*. Simon spoke to them about the last yam ritual; then they had had seven men. One man (Tobias) was 'finished', he said, another one was in hospital. That afternoon at the airstrip we had said good-bye and wailed for Simon's elder brother Bill who was flown to Darwin Hospital. Simon expressed his concern about the lack of interest in the ceremony. He stated that only five men, not mentioning the yam ritual of his brother Theodore in Milikapiti, still carried out the *kulama* on Melville Island.

Present in the *kulama* camp were, among others, Nancy, Simon's sisters Mary (from Milikapiti) and Mabel, Jeanette and I, and the people mentioned above. Somewhat later came Tobias' stepdaughter Ruth, his daughter Heather, and Jerome's son Reuben. During the first night not only Tobias' daughters stayed in the camp to listen to the mourning songs for their father but also Oscar Pamantari (a man accused by Sam of having killed Tobias) and his second wife, who visited the camp to listen to the mourning songs for Oscar's deceased sister. Other visitors came and left during the ritual. Edmund was instructed by Jerome and would reach the fourth grade of initiation (*mikinatringa*) for which he had to perform his first song in the *ajipa* (cf. Goodale 1971: 207). Therewith, however, Edmund was considered almost fully initiated; he only would have to compose three songs for the *ajipa* in the next *kulama*. My 'brother-in-law' Simon gave me instructions: I had to participate in a number of rituals (e.g., the fire-throwing, 'spearing' of the yams) but did not have to sing. After we had painted our bodies with red ochres the ritual could start.

The first night

A discussion between the men and women followed about sneak attackers who were supposed to be coming (as noted above). On this occasion in

remembrance of Tobias, Simon wanted Tobias' former lover Nancy to begin the singing. She directed herself towards Tobias' hut, uttering verbal expressions of sorrow, '*agai-agai-agai*' (something like 'oh, dear'). Then Nancy proceeded with a widow or *ambaru*-song: (Dead man telling his deceased wives) 'Come along and make the *kulama* like my brother and son./Go and hear the *kulama*!/It's the first night they sing./I can't let my son and my brother sing by themselves.' Instead of the names of the deceased Nancy mentioned the names of their *mutuni* (cf. chapter 5, Table 1). The spirits of Tobias and his wives were supposed to come to the *kulama*. The singer referred to Tobias' 'son' Simon (female speaking, *mworti*) and his elder 'brother' Sam.

Jerome was the next person who had to sing, because Tobias had been married to his half-sister. He walked backward and forward performing an *ambaru*-song: (Dead man saying) 'How you gotta sing my son?/I don't know how you sing my son./Maybe you will name those people who murdered me.' Again, by Tobias' 'son' Simon was meant. Jerome and the audience wailed. Sam and Nancy called out in appreciation of the song. Nancy commented, 'That's mean he good singer (*jerengapuranti*), giving him sorry, because he got good voice and he sing very well, he pronounce properly words.'

The fire-throwing, described above, took place; then in the ceremonial ground Jerome performed a song about a grievance concerning people who had not turned up for a mortuary ritual he had organised on their request, followed by a mourning song by Edmund for a deceased 'daughter'. Roger sang about his classificatory son Tobias: 'Those people from Pularumpi, they are bad soldiers (*kwampi*)/They cut in half my penis with a knife.' Roger indicated his bereavement status (*unantani pulanga*) and made an allusion to the killing. He continued: 'Those shit-people (*kulingumpi*), maybe they ate faeces and they been murder that man.' Eating excrement was a sign of madness; at the same time it alluded to excrement (*kineri*), a dreaming of Tobias' grandfather. Destroying someone's faeces happened to be a technique to kill that particular person (cf. Puruntatameri *et al.* 1979). Furthermore, Roger verbally abused the people who had killed Tobias. In ordinary life such an insult could not be left unchallenged. People would say, 'I am not a piece of excrement, I have a lot of names.' In other words, the singer urged the killers to make themselves known. He wailed, repeated his song, and wailed again, 'giving sorry man underneath mango tree'. Nancy inserted a mourning song of her own in her wailing: (Dead man saying) 'How would my father think about me?/I am a dead man.' The song seems to express wonder about how it could have happened, as both Tobias and Minapini were reputed fighters. As mentioned before, a son was supposed to follow his father's character traits, and Minapini was a killer of renown.

Roger performed another mourning song for his deceased 'grandchildren'. He kept repeating this song, and all the time Nancy had to sing after him. She told him, her 'mother's brother', to stop. 'Where are

your wives?', she said, 'They do not sing after you!' She refused to sing after him any longer saying he never gave her 'land rights' money' (money he received for attending the meetings of the Tiwi Land Council as a delegate). Simon sang about people in Nguiu who had unjustly been talking about him not being 'really *pukamani*' after his classificatory father's death. Mary and Mabel repeated his song. Sam performed a song about the morning Tobias' body had been discovered under the mango tree. He knew he had been accused, by Mary among others, of having killed his younger 'brother'. As an elder 'brother', however, he was supposed to protect him. Sam pointed out in his song that he could hardly be blamed, as he had been asleep and was 'deaf' (could not understand, in both senses of the term): 'My own granddaughter Claudia came and she woke me up, "Why are you sleeping? Your brother is dead, you stupid!"'

Jerome also sang about Tobias. He alluded to a twofold trouble, according to Nancy. First, Jerome made more or less an admission of guilt: he had been arguing with Tobias in the Social Club claiming he was mischievous. Second, after a number of discussions the bereaved children decided he would not be buried in Pularumpi but somewhere else. Jerome sang: 'He [Tobias] did not do that/He would not do that, go away from this place/Maybe somebody here was talking about him/He [Tobias] is saying he heard people talking about him/That's why he run away from this place.' Earlier I described Tobias' plans and attempts to leave Pularumpi. He stated he did not want the troubles he had become involved in. The only way to avoid an escalation of the conflict was to move away; Tobias was well aware of that. Then Jerome took the stance of his deceased half-sister Kate, Tobias' second wife: 'All my kids [female speaking, implying himself as their mother's brother] are crying for their father/They are all crying just like a frog.' After their mother's death, a paternal 'sister' of Tobias of the Alitaraka family had raised the children, the youngest being only eigtheen months old. Therefore, they were crying like a frog or *alitaraka*; this reflected their personal experience of having been separated from their father before. At the same time the 'crying like a frog' was an allusion to their decision-making about their father's burial place, about which they kept changing their minds. Jerome was of the opinion that Tobias wanted to be buried in Pularumpi near his three wives and brother. He commented to me that it was 'silly' to split up the family. In his wailing he called out, 'Oh, my husband!', 'Oh, my children [female speaking]!', denoting, according to Nancy, 'he got a big mob of family'. Next he addressed Simon and Simon's sisters , his 'father' and 'father's sisters', in a mourning song woven into his crying: 'Maybe there was talking about him/That's why he ran away from Pularumpi/He lives by himself [made his home] at Pawularitarra.' This song ended with an expression of grief identifying Korupu's (actual and classificatory) decendants: '*ninka-ninka-ninka*'. As we have seen, Korupu forwarned the victims of Tobias' father in this way.[114] After his performance Jerome said to the audience, 'He [Tobias] left his brother [buried] here.'

Simon composed a mourning song about Tobias' last wife Marylou, who had died when Simon's car, driven by Kevin, rolled over. Simon's children were bereaved maternal 'siblings' (*paputawi*) of the dead woman. They were entitled to ask their father to organise the postfuneral rituals for her. Simon's clan namely related to the women's clan as 'mother's brother'. Simon sang: (His children saying) 'Hey, what about you?/You did not make a ceremony!'; (Somebody else talking to him) 'Well, you shouldn't make big fuss of this, because your daughter's accident.' It was a convention that the singer in a position to be possibly blamed expressed an intention to destroy the cause of death (e.g., 'I will cook the murderer on the fire', or 'I will smash that spit' in the case of a tuberculosis patient). Simon's car had been the agent of the women's death; he continued, 'Yeah, I will bust that car!' Nancy explained to me that people had asked Simon, 'Why do you not go to kill [hit] him [Kevin]'?, but he held it was 'his own fault' for he had consented to them using his car. Hence his next song line might be seen as an admission of guilt in answering the question: 'I won't do that!' Simon wailed and performed a mourning song in *mamanukuni*-style: 'I nearly bust 'em up that car!'; I nearly burned my car!' Nancy exclaimed, 'Tom is coming!' Simon sang fast like his classificatory father, the late Tom Palurati, a brother of Tobias' first wife Gloria and clan brother of Marylou. In 'following' this 'father', alluding to the high speed with which the car had been driven at the same time, the singer closely identified with his dead 'daughter'.

Jerome sang about a grievance. He claimed he would have been given a clan sister of Tobias for organising a mortuary ritual for her deceased father, because he was a 'good songwriter'. He hadn't gotten the woman. During the time of my fieldwork he kept rebuking her relatives for not handing her to him whenever performed in mortuary rituals for these people. Once he even refused to dance at a funeral because he 'did not get a girl' from them.

Edmund performed a mourning song for Tobias, his 'sister's son': 'I am sorry for my son [female speaking], I lost him./I still think about him, he used to say *ilimani* [mother's brother].'[115] Sam sang about his wife who performed as a widow in the burial ceremonies for his 'brother' Tobias: (Saying to his 'children') 'There was a big mob of people who saw our mother dancing./There at Pawularitarra she did her top off.'

Simon in his song for Tobias stressed his bereavement status (*mamurapi pularti*, cf. chapter 5, Table 1 and 2): 'To where is my mother's milk gone?/I didn't drink really milk!/Who did it, busting my mother's milk?' In other words, he sang, who killed Tobias? While wailing he called out, 'I am really sorry for you my 'mother's brother'!'

Jerome sang about a grievance: someone had stolen his beer in the Social Club. He verbally abused the thief. Roger had composed a song about his 'grandfather' who died in a car crash. Simon shouted, 'That's the voice!' Roger sang with the voice of the deceased, Simon's dear friend (Simon cried when he showed me his picture of the dead man at another time). Sam then

sang about his deceased sister's daughter, how she had listened to his wife's mourning songs. Roger in his next song renamed Purikikini who carried out the first *kulama* Kulamakini. He stated they had to sing in the same way (that is, as fully initiated men). Simon sang about his grievance towards people in Nguiu who had forbidden him to hold a proper ceremony for his deceased 'mother', a devout Catholic. He stressed his qualities as a performer and stated he would refuse to sing and dance if someone of her clan would die. Jerome composed a mourning song for a Tiwi woman, a parallel cousin, who had died in a car accident in Darwin. He told about a big boat (a dreaming shared with the deceased) that sank on its way to their ancestral countries so they had to swim. Simon stated another grievance in relation to a mortuary ritual: he mentioned the names of people who 'did tell lies', as they had told him there would be a ritual for his mother-in-law but there was none, and he had gone for nothing.

Sam emphasised his bereavement status in singing about Tobias' death. He was a bereaved maternal 'brother' (*putani*), and therefore he had to sing about his injured leg: 'I am lying down here at Pularumpi/I got something, I got pain in my leg.' Sam forgot his song text. Nancy corrected him and added a last line: 'Something, maybe you got big boil on your leg.' Then she, outside the ceremonial ground, performed herself: (Dead man saying) 'My elder 'brother' is still thinking about me!'; (She herself) 'We are having *kulama* with our 'son' [female speaking, Simon].' Jerome repeated his earlier song about Tobias.

Simon sang about a fight he had had at Milikapiti over Tobias' stepdaughter Ruth. He had fought the man who unjustly tried to secure her. Simon stated she was his 'girl', no one could have her; he came first and his elder brother, her husband Theodore, came last. Edmund sang about a woman he had asked to become his second wife. She had spat at him and refused, saying he was 'too old' for her. Roger performed a song about his lover Melanie, alluding to her name 'Big Boat', and stating he did not trust other men to have his boat.

Simon sang about his deceased 'brother' from Nguiu who spoke to him. He had been waiting for him at Pularumpi but the dead man had passed by the township on his way to his ancestral country further north. Roger in another mourning song had his deceased 'sister' call out for him but he did not answer her. In other words, she was dead. The 'night of sorrow' had come to an end. The men had sung about their grievances and grief.

The second day

On Saturday morning the men carried out the rituals described above: they got the yams in the jungle and hid them behind a tree not far from the camp.

Late in the afternoon the men cleared the ceremonial place. They made a large circle of elevated sand. In the middle they erected the *kulama* oven. Their songs dealt with the topic of cleaning in a broad sense. Jerome, for example, stated that there was death and rubbish in the ceremonial ring; he used a loader to clean it up. Simon sang about another cleansing, a

confession of the people who had killed Tobias: 'I am a cheeky bugger, I can kill everybody/And you only call yourself cheeky but you do not go and hit people like this/Well, you should come up and talk to us in front of these people sitting here.'

After dark we sneaked up to 'spear' the hidden yams, splashed ourselves with water, and covered up the yams again. Next the men sang about boats, their mothers-in-law, and their children, in that order. In the metaphorical songs about boats all sorts of relationships (to countries, dreamings, particular people or clans) could be emphasised. Conventional metaphors were used in the songs about mothers-in-law. Jerome sang: 'I have a new rope [that is, a mother-in-law]/I put it up between the trees/I jumped without touching the rope [denoting the avoidance relationship]/No one can beat me, I am the only one who jumps over that rope.' Nancy laughed when Edmund sang: 'No one at all can put one's shadow [go past] on that shoulder belonging to me.' She was Edmund's mother-in-law but her only daughter had married an Aboriginal man from the mainland. Before the marriage, in the early 1970s, Edmund had stirred up a big fight. He had come to the wedding painted up all in white (a sign of his sorrow over the loss of his promised wife). Nancy said that in the *kulama* he still reminded her she was a 'mongrel mother-in-law'. Roger and Simon sang about their mothers-in-law as climbing up a tree. As I said earlier, the songs about their children, sons in this Pularumpi case, were about some form of atlethic competition between them. After all this singing the people went to sleep. Around the camp, flying foxes perched on the mango and cashew trees in the moonlight.

The third day

The following day, Sunday, pieces of ant-bed were put on top of the oven. Simon sang about himself as the spirit *jamparipari* flying to his country, Edmund about being a wild honey bee going into a tree. The oven was lit. Simon sang, following this ritual action, that he set the blanket and clothes of an unfaithful wife on fire when she was asleep, whereupon she had to run away naked. Then the men singed their body and pubic hair with burning twigs and shaved off their beards. The men painted their bodies with red ochres; then, one after the other, they sang again, this time about the irresistable attractiveness of their female cousins (*aminiatuwi*), pretending they were these women themselves. After this the men left the camp and returned with the yams.

Next the men sang of gathering and hunting foods (stingrays, barramundi fish, mussels, cycad fruits) in abundance in their countries, stating how they shared these with people who could not go foraging. While the fire was burning down, songs about the deceased were performed.

Most of the songs concerned Tobias' violent death. Roger sang: 'That is the man [who killed Tobias], he should own up/But I have a one-sided barbed spear (*tunkwaliti*) here standing up beside me to shoot him back too/Maybe I got to forgive him after I have found out from the police.'

Edmund proceeded: 'Oh well, people should find out that killer, because he killed my 'son' [female speaking, Tobias].' Simon performed another song telling the killer(s) to confess the homicide: 'Those people, they murdered my 'mother's brother' [Tobias]/Their fathers are rubbish [excrement] but his father was a murderman/Maybe that trouble was here with him, they bring it out because they been murder him.' Jerome, however, sang about Purukupali who said all people had to die because his son had died. He should not have said that, according to the singer; he was 'talking wrong thing'. Sam had left the *kulama* camp. Jerome told me that Sam was frightened.

The men cleared the ashes and 'buried' the yams in the earth oven. They patted the mound, mimicking the mythological pelican. After about an hour, when the yams were nearly ready, they resumed the singing. Related to the preparation of the yams, the songs told about a bell ringing for dinner, a table laid, and intentions to eat the large amount of food all oneself. Sam, who was present again, pretended he was a waiter serving the people. The yams were dug out. After the *kulama* yams had cooled, covered in the paperbark, these were peeled and sliced, and laid down on the paperbark in the open. The men rubbed their bodies (head, eyes, chest, and crooks of the limbs in particular) with the yam mash mixed with red ochres. They gave a similar treatment to their little children and grandchildren who had come to them. Some of the women rubbed themselves with the yam mash as well.

Then the *kulama* men took considerable time in painting themselves up in four colours, with the exemption of Edmund, whose face was painted in yellow and black by his instructor Jerome. They were now ready for the *ajipa*. Edmund started with his first and only *ajipa*-song (*inupunkuripia*) about the modern means of communication on the islands (telephones, VCRs and television sets). He sang that he saw aerials everywhere on the islands. Jerome sang after him that he had painted Edmund's face. Simon performed a song about about an international jukong (Balinese outrigger) race from Bali to Melville Island (that occurred months earier), how these people despite the rough sea had arrived safely. Sam sang that he had been falsely accused of having killed his 'brother' Tobias: 'Those people at Nguiu and at Milikapiti gathered around and were talking about me/They were saying maybe I did kill my 'brother', I am *putani* [bereaved of a maternal 'brother']/I would not do that, kill my 'brother' like this.' When he stumbled over his words the other men encouraged him to go on with his song.

Roger and Jerome in a song referred to the people in the other townships who had been gossiping about people in Pularumpi concerning Tobias' violent death. They said the latter were not rubbish but had a lot of names. In his last songline Roger alluded to one backbiter, a bachelor in Nguiu, 'I didn't stay with my mother!' Simon sang about a woman who had lied when she said he would be the only man she would have and that she would come to live with him. Sam performed a song about the welcome dances at the beach for the people of the jukong race mentioned above.

The yams were brought back to the tree away from the camp, and were left to soak in the water. The *kulama* men and I performed the mullet dance in the ceremonial ground, making the movements of mullet fish jumping over the water. This dance of a dreaming of the eldest man in the *kulama*, Sam, alluded to the yams soaking in the water. It identified Sam, and by implication his 'brother' Tobias, with their repective fathers who had one mother; the mullets jumped over the water near the seat of their clan (*imunga*), Wulintu or Nodlaw Island. In a rather complex song Roger linked his ancestral burial sites in his country Imalu, moving from the north towards Pularumpi, water being the theme of his song, and his relationship to Tobias: 'At Tupulurupi [grave of his FB, MF of Tobias' second wife] I started to be *pukamani* /I nearly washed myself at Punguwamiritigi [grave of his MFB, Tobias' F'Z'F and clansman]/At Pungolumpi ['crocodile's nest' near Salt Creek where Tobias' third wife, a woman of Roger's clan, died while going out for a hunt] I still have *pukamani* [cannot touch food]/I sit down at Tuloriati [grave of his father at a freshwater creek near Pularumpi]/My father said, "Why are you *pukamani*?"/And I said, "I am *unantani*" [bereaved of a 'son', Tobias].'[116] Jerome sang about a shark, his dreaming, in rough sea near his ancestral country. Coming through big waves the shark had stronger fins than a shovelnosed stingray.

Then the men in Pularumpi performed songs about their daughters. Jerome sang about his daughters, who learned from their elder sister Jeanette how to dance on the mudflat at the beach. Simon in his song stated that his daughters were playing and fighting at the beach. His eldest daughter Mildred gave them a smack when they were swearing. They all had to dance for her. Edmund sang that all were clapping for his daughter when she was dancing. Next Simon sang about his clan members: 'When they drink it's not very good/I am a bottle of liquor and my whole clan is drinking away/When they drink they have a wobbling gait/When they have finished all that beer they are telling all those stories.' Simon, a non-drinker, described himself as a bottle of liquor because they frequently asked him for money to buy beer. The bottle of liquor alluded to the fight between Tobias and Jacob in addition. I was told people in Milikapiti had accused Sam of having killed Tobias; women of Simon's clan, including his sister Mary, were pointed out to me as the scandalmongers. Hence their drunken talk.

Finally the *kulama* men sang about their eyes. Jerome pretended he was Purikikini, the mythological owl, looking at people. Edmund sang he was a jungle fowl, when he saw people he shook his wings and his feathers ('hair') went up (*momaringini*, that is, 'he got fright'). Simon performed the last song. The bird was a dreaming of him too. He sang that people tried to shoot him with a slingshot. He, the bird, moved his shoulders, calling out, 'Nobody can shoot me because I am a good dancer.'

The fourth day
Early the next morning the men threw pieces of ant-bed at a tree. Ant-bed was also put against the inside of the small mound encircling the ceremonial ground. Because of the heavy rainfall the people then left the *kulama* camp.

6.5 The *kulama* at Myilly Point (Nguiu, Bathurst Island)

At the beginning of this chapter I described how Jack Munuluka started his *kulama* by directing himself towards Tobias' spirit at the location of his grave on the other side of the Apsley Strait. Jack, classificatory father of Tobias, was the 'boss' of the yam ritual held at Myilly Point in Nguiu from May 18 onwards. In the early 1950s Tobias used to live on the spot where the *kulama* would be carried out. Two 'brothers' of Jack, Basil and Ryan Munuluka, took part with him in the ritual. They were all grandsons (SS) of Kantilla, Tobias' father's companion in the killings at Matalau. At the last minute Bruce Kerimerini decided not to take part in the *kulama*. He said he had to withdraw because his wife was very ill. Nevertheless, he happened to be present most of the time to listen to the songs. Jack's sister Mavis had come with her husband from Pularumpi to support her brother in singing after him. Nancy, together with Sam, my wife and I, had also come to 'help' with the singing. Mona, the mother of Ryan, a bachelor, and four other women, including a sister of Tobias' last wife, participated as well. These women had lived at the outstation Paru, on the Melville Island side of the sea strait, not far from the place where Tobias had been buried. They told me they had moved across to Nguiu on Bathurst Island because they were afraid of the spirit of the dead man (*mopaditi*). The women would not return before the final mortuary rituals for Tobias had been accomplished. During the first night of the *kulama* several people came to listen to the mourning songs for their deceased relatives. Steven Tampajani, a paternal 'brother' of Tobias, was one of them. Tobias' children were present throughout the ritual.

The ritual procedure and the subject matter of the songs were more or less the same as in Pularumpi. To avoid unnecessary repetition I will in this section only cite the song texts concerning Tobias and the homicide.

The 'night of sorrow'
After Jack sang for Tobias' spirit to listen to him, a sister of Tobias' last wife Marylou responded in a widow or *ambaru*-song. This woman, Dorothy, a former co-wife of Tobias' wife, mentioned the names of her deceased husbands instead of their paternal 'brother' Tobias: (Dead men saying) 'We are sitting in the mangroves at the boat-landing (near Tobias' burial place) listening to our 'father' [Jack].' Jack called out again to Tobias' spirit at Pawularitarra.

Jack then staged a song of complaint: 'My friends sent a letterstick [message] from Pularumpi to here/When I was reading that letterstick I couldn't understand it/That letterstick came from my 'mother's brother's daughters' but I couldn't understand/Only one telephone call I received.' Nancy explained to me his grievance was that he, being Tobias' 'father', had not properly been informed about Tobias' death by his relatives from Pularumpi. Mary's daughter Karen had made the phone call from Darwin. Nancy had no doubts about its contents. She shouted in defence of her husband, 'He wouldn't do that, one *amoa*!' In other words, Sam and Tobias had the same father's mother (*amoa*), and therefore it was out of the question that he would have killed his own 'brother'. They were related too closely, she argued. No one in the audience responded directly to her yelling.

Later that night Jack performed a mourning song for Tobias' last wife Marylou, as she was of his clan. He called her 'mother': 'Where about is my mother gone?/She won't come alive again/I was looking for her everywhere/I tried to call out for her but she couldn't answer me.'

The second day

When the men had cleared the ceremonial ground and erected the *kulama* oven they sang, beating time with two sticks, about the cleaning of the area. In his song Jack stated he cleared the ceremonial ground to have a fight with the man who killed Tobias. He depicted this man as a coward: 'I am cleaning the place for this murderman/I will get two large clubs (*lukwalukwa*) and crush his face/When he sees these large clubs he will run away.'

After dark the men painted in red silently sneaked up to the yams, symbolically killed these, and ritually cleansed themselves with water (*moluki*) to remove the pollution resulting from the 'killing'. Back in the ceremonial ground Basil Munuluka sang: 'I myself wash away *pukamani* [referring to the red paint, associated with Tobias' country]/I am giving myself sorry because I am washing away *pukamani*.' He expressed his regret that he could not go on with an actual killing, avenging Tobias' death.

Ryan Munuluka had composed a song about the myth of Purukupali and Tapara or the moon: 'Tapara and Purukupali had a fight, and Purukupali was wounded, got shot, at his leg by Tapara/He put blood [running] on the ceremonial ring (*milimika*).' As mentioned before, Purukupali killed his younger maternal 'brother' Tapara, the moon, who had seduced Purukapali's wife. According to Nancy, Ryan had raised suspicions against her husband Sam. The allegory presented in the song text was suggestive. Sam and his younger maternal 'brother' Tobias, who had an affair with Sam's wife, had had a fight too. Sam had suffered a leg injury; literally, because he had been bitten on his legs by dogs (his dreaming) for, so I was told, he had not painted them following Tobias' death (cf. chapter 9). Symbolically, because in an allegorical representation of Purukupali he became a bereaved maternal 'brother' (*putani*) of Tobias (cf. chapter 5). Then, taking the analogy a bit further, the elder 'brother' had put blood on

the younger one. Tobias, the younger 'brother', had been found dead covered with blood. In the purification rituals this location, where this yam ritual had been initially planned, became a ceremonial ground. The younger 'brother', Tapara or the moon, was represented here by the ceremonial ring. Red ochres, with the connotation of blood, had just been sprinkled on the ceremonial circle (*milimika*).

Jack took up this theme and stressed his bereavement status when he sang: 'Leeches have bitten me and a lot of blood comes running from my penis/I am bleeding [a lot of blood running] on where I walk in the ceremonial ring.' Jack's words were also suggestive of an allegation. As I said, the *kulama* men had splashed themselves with water (*moluki*) after they had symbolically attacked the yams. In the past the men and the yams went into a pond or billabong in a swamp (cf. Spencer 1914; Goodale 1971). One of Sam's dreamings was *iliti*. Sam's brother Bruce explained it to me as follows, '*iliti* when you go *moluki* in a swamp, round one like billabong, in that swamp you go *moluki* you feel itchy from that *iliti*, swamp at Bathurst Island, there *iliti*'. Jack did not mention *iliti* directly but stated leeches had bitten him. These were the cause of him becoming bereaved of his 'son' Tobias, represented by his bleeding penis and the ceremonial ring. I believe the esoteric and metaphorical song texts were left deliberately ambiguous (cf. Keen 1977; Pilling 1958: 97). It must be noted that Sam in the *kulama* in Pularumpi himself had sung that people in Nguiu and Milikapiti had gathered around and said he maybe had killed his 'brother' Tobias.

The third day

The next day in the afternoon, when the fire of the *kulama* oven was burning down, the men, painted with red ochres, sang again about the deceased. The men here performed a so-called *karinimawatumingumi* each, a song telling a 'murderer' to confess. He was urged to say, 'I am, I did it'. These were also songs of revenge. According to Nancy, this type of song, *purakutukintinga*, had to be performed when the fire was burning. Pilling notes such a song (for which he recorded the terms *parumukutjinga* and *watumukutjinga*) might be sung on the third day of the yam ritual. He writes, 'These songs were sung by a principal in a revenge killing. The singer of a *parumukutjinga* composes words about a person whose murder he had already avenged or whose murder he still intends to avenge' (1958: 101). The three men in the *kulama* were entitled to avenge the killing of their 'son' Tobias.

Jack was dressed up as the leader of a revenge expedition. He had painted himself all in red, wore a headdress of cockatoo feathers and a goose-feather ball around his neck. Jack held up a bundle of red coloured spears, as formerly used by sneak attackers or *kwampi* and sang: 'That murderman he should say, "I am the one who killed that man, I made you *unantani* (bereaved 'father')"/You should come here and say, "I am the one who killed your son"/If you don't come here I will kill you with a spear in the side of your body.' While wailing he performed a *mamanukuni*-song:

(Dead man saying) 'Just like that my 'father'!/You get a spear and shoot him in his side.' Instead of himself the singer mentioned the name of his grandfather Kantilla, who speared a victim in his side at Matalau, to which the song alluded.

Basil proceeded with the following song: 'Somebody whispered in my ears, "Maybe someone at Pularumpi has killed your 'son'"/But I was not told about the murderer/If they tell me who did it I will go and spear him!/I want to see him in front but they all sneak away/I want to spit him in his face.' In other words, Basil said the killers were cowards. By his intention 'to spit him in the face' he indicated he wanted to initiate a fight. Nancy echoed Jack's words in a 'widow'-song: (Dead man saying) 'Just like that my dad!/Hold up the spear and spear him in the side of his body.'

Ryan stressed another feature of Kantilla's fighting. Once, when his grandfather had no spears left, he went on to fight with his bare hands and knocked his opponents down. In the ambush meant as a counter-killing, Kantilla's victim had called out, 'Don't do that, don't kill me!' Ryan recalled this in his song: 'That murderman here, I want to grab him with both hands and knock him down/If he stays here with me I will get a spear and spear him/He will call out, that [supposedly] cheeky man now, "Don't do that, don't kill me!".'

When the fire had completely burned down, Tobias' children had to perform a *turagha* or man-killing dance depicting spirit children and sneak attackers. They had their bodies painted with red ochres and held spears, previously held by Jack but now untied, in their left hands. Their 'father' Bruce Kerimerini, who was fiercely beating time with two fighting clubs, sang the accompanying song: 'The shark went into Pupatu creek [their country, burial site of Bruce's and Sam's grandfather]./Big waves made him invisible./At Wangaru [another country, burial site of Isaac's and Oscar Puruntatameri's grandfather] there were big waves but the shark was underneath the water.' The song had been composed by Bruce's father Purimini in the early 1930s for the mortuary rituals for Tobias' sister Tomunungumau, who died as a little girl. The shark might be seen here as a sneak attacker who under the cover of darkness invaded another country to kill. Tiwi depict the shark in shallow water as chasing its prey, the mullet fish (Tobias' dreaming) for instance. Tobias' children, instructed by Bruce, merged their dance with movements of the shark dance. The dancers symbolically speared the ashes in the middle of the ring. While they were dancing Jack called out to the audience, 'Their grandfather is a real murderman (*kwampini*)! He is not afraid of anybody!' Dorothy, the sister of Tobias' last wife Marylou, composed a 'widow'-song for them: (Dead man saying) 'You give them sorry, my son and daughters dancing.'

Late at night, after the *ajipa*, Dorothy sang another *ambaru*-song: (Minapini telling his son) 'That lady she is singing with a different voice.' Nancy explained to me she meant she had been drunk, as had her sister when she died in the car accident. When the men came to the phase of singing for

their sons, Dorothy composed the following song: (Tobias saying to his father) 'Maybe your niece [Marylou] is coming close to me.'

6.6 Symbolic killing

We have seen many references to symbolic death or killing and destruction in the yam ritual. Initiates and yams, for instance, were symbolically speared. The dance with (imaginary) spears of the patrilineal *unantawi*, representing spirit children and sneak attackers, encompassed a symbolic killing as well. These were part of the killing-rebirth symbolism marking transitions in rites of passage (Hertz 1960; Van Gennep 1960). Death by means of homicide is so sudden and abrupt that it is a powerful image of separation in the *kulama* and the death rituals alike. Hertz, in his seminal work, notes the importance of a symbolic killing as a rite of separation in death rituals:

> It is [al]so true that natural death is not sufficient to sever the ties binding the deceased to this world, that in order to become a legitimate and authentic inhabitant of the land of the dead he must first be killed. [He sees this as an initiation, as the deceased] cannot be promoted to the ranks of the true spirits, until he has been ritually killed and has been born anew. (1960: 73)

Deaths in Aboriginal societies were often treated as if the persons in question were killed (cf. Spencer & Gillen 1968: 476; Elkin 1964: 319; Maddock 1986: 156). Tiwi acknowledge sickness as a cause of death, but at the same time they represent deaths as if some human agency were involved, whether a violation of a taboo by the deceased acted upon by a spirit of the dead, a 'poisoning', neglect or action by the living, or armed spirits of the dead coming to take the spirit of the dying with them.

In the ritual context, as we have seen, a symbolic killing frequently occurs. Rooted in the people's experience, killings of humans by sneak attackers (as well as in spear duels and fights) might be seen as an institutionalised way of dealing with conflicts (especially those related to 'woman trouble'). Of course, from their experiences as hunters also these Aboriginal people are very familiar with the act of killing.[117] The most prestigeous mode of killing is by spears, either in the hunt, sneak attacks, fights or symbolic spearing of the deceased (by spirits of the dead, and in the dances with spears of the patrilineal *unantawi*, in the past the grave mound was even literally speared), initiates, yams, young women during the first menses ritual (*muringelata*), and in spiritual conception. Killing for Tiwi includes also hitting or injuring. Conflicts and fights are often terminated with a 'good hiding' or beating with clubs, ritual punishments encompass a flogging, the bereaved hit themselves, the spirits of the dead are chased away by hitting with sticks or boughs; the same happens in mock fights during mortuary rituals, the ritual whipping of initiates and young women during first menses, or the father hitting the hand of his daughter's

first newborn child. A third mode of killing or destruction entails burning, drowning, and burial. This happens to the belongings of the deceased and of living persons with whom one wants to break all ties. Analogously to the seasonal grass-burning, body, pubic and facial hair are burned, and a cleansing fire is employed in ritual (in smoke rituals and fires to chase the spirits of the dead away, in fire-throwing and -jumping, and the *kulama* oven). Drowning in water is the acknowledged remedy against possession by certain spirits, and ritual baths punctuate cleansings and lift taboos. Burials are used in relation to the deceased, their belongings, the yams, and initiates as physical separations denoting a change of status. Killing in the senses mentioned above (actual or symbolic) appears to be a precondition for any transition in Tiwi society. Actual or symbolic death (of animals, humans, and human conditions) appears in Tiwi cosmology not to belong to nature but to the realm of culture.

The cult of killing happens to be exemplified by the ritually important barbed spears that stand not only for the kill (main attribute of spirits of the dead and sneak attackers) but also new life, people of the next generation (in spiritual conception, showing of a spear to the father of the newborn child, representing the future wife, and so on). The spearing links symbolic death and rebirth. This is plainly clear in the *turagha* dance of the bereaved children. On the one hand, they act as sneak attackers killing the deceased, symbolising the transition of the deceased from the world of the living to the world of the dead. On the other hand, re-enacting their spiritual conception symbolises their becoming bereaved and a transition from the first descending generation to the top generation. One informant called it their 'second birth in dancing'. Killing in the hunt might not only be seen in the light of death but also provides people with food and nourishment. Thus on this basic level, killing in this society is necessary for the continuity of human life. In sum, on a symbolic level the act of killing - characterised by abruptness, suddenness, and irreversibility - represents a radical breaking of ties and separation, employed to mark clear-cut transitions.[118]

Recently, Bloch has taken up the theme of symbolic killing in an essay called 'Prey into Hunter' (1992).[119] In part he echoes Hertz (without mentioning him) but he also adds a new element, emphasising what he has termed 'rebounding violence'. He looks at the nature of ritual processes following a set pattern the world over. According to Bloch,

> These irreducable structures of religious phenomena are ritual representations of the existence of human beings in time. In fact this ritual representation is a simple transformation of the material processes of life in plants and animals as well as humans. The transformation takes place in an idiom which has two distinguishing features: first, it is accomplished through a classic three-stage dialectical process, and secondly it involves a marked element of violence or (...) of conquest (ibid.: 4).

Bloch refers to the second process as the idiom of 'rebounding violence' (ibid.). In short, he argues that something is gained by the symbolism of violence which is part of many religious phenomena; the persons

undergoing it are changed, for the violence acted upon them is rebounding, enabling them to enter a world beyond process, and appropriating and conquering an external vitality. In other words, the symbolic killing is a precondition for the participants to obtain the forces and vitality of transcendental entities, whether they be animals, plants, other human beings (and, I think, one might add the spiritual world). In this way, for instance, initiates are transformed from prey into hunters, from victims into killers (Bloch 1992). One need not agree with Bloch to see that in the Tiwi *kulama* ritual and the mortuary rituals the symbolism is considered efficacious. The ritual transformations of deceased, yams, initiates and bereaved undergoing the symbolic processes of death and rebirth have in indigenous exegesis an outcome indicating a supranatural vitality. I have mentioned these renewed forces, so adequately represented by the moon - killed and regenerated - in the yam ritual above. Ritually processed yams and people (dead or alive) incorporate and bring good luck, well-being, nourishment, peaceful relationships, protection, health, and so forth. I referred to the nurturing, health- and luck-giving properties of yams and ancestral graves.

Tiwi people connect and interweave personal experiences with the central narrative of the ritual process. This intermingling of stories has a common plot, transition and consummation or conquest of external vitality. These processes are neither devoid of politics nor of emotion, ensuring the participants' engagement and promotion of their interests. Related dead, having been symbolically killed (not unlike the detoxified *kulama* yams), might be seen as extremely important sources of external vitality. The supposed closeness of the living and the dead (including other spiritual entities) enables the transmission to the living of forces beyond their world. Internalisation of these forces, for instance, is exemplified by the living speaking with the voices of the dead, the re-enactments of vitality-promoting deeds of ancestors and spiritual beings, and the perceived favourable results from contacts with spirits of the dead (assisting in hunting and gathering, giving protection, taking the newly deceased to the world of the dead) and ancestral graves (healing, good luck, etc.).

In all this, Tobias' violent death had a special quality. His abrupt death in Tiwi conceptions did not rob his spirit of vitality or his prowess as a fighter. Tobias' spirit was frequently reported to have attempted to kill certain people. In the ritual processes his spirit had to be neutralised; hence the elaborate mortuary rituals and a dedication of the two major yam rituals to Tobias. I see the extraordinary ritual attention to Tobias' spirit as a symbolic process not only in terms of redress but also as a cosmological procedure for rechanneling and incorporating the dead man's vitality into the survivors. The dance of his children in the Nguiu yam ritual, for instance, expressed their anger and intentions to avenge their father's death and at the same time transmitted the powers and character traits, such as aggressiveness and fierceness, of their deceased father and grandfather (a killer par excellence) to them. The yam and mortuary rituals play on the theme of killing. The actual killing of Tobias, as perceived and experienced,

emphasised and reflected upon in ritual, enforced with its strong emotional appeal and sense of reality the ordinary ritual process, strengthening its perceived efficacy. The narrative aspects of Tiwi ritual allowed the participants to deal with their grievances and grief in a personal manner while at the same time integrating these ritualised personal experiences into the grand ritual scheme. Tobias termed the *kulama* as 'fight by words' (*ngirramini*); in mortuary ritual the chief performers were said 'to argue one another' (*umprukutliajwatupi*, 'we gotta arguing one another'). As I said before, the participants can deal with these matters, of utmost importance in their personal lives, in the ritual context without having to fear reprisal. The excitement and vitality of sex, destruction, arguments, fights, and killings are played upon in a symbolic way too. The negative aspects of life, both actual and imaginary, in the ritual process through a psychotherapeutic cleansing become transformed into positive forces strengthening the living. Here, I believe, lies the preoccupation of Tiwi with sex and death, in their marking relatedness (between whatsoever). Sexuality and death, as Ariès has pointed out, are the two weak points in human society where nature penetrates culture (1983: 604).

Minapini's role in the killings at Matalau was worked out and selectively integrated in Tiwi ritual performances. Continuously, relevant experiences of the living were taken up and carried on, even by following generations of performers, in ritual. The ongoing existential input in ritual, instead of a fixation of one and the same ritual contents, shaped an emotionally compelling link between the participants and the chain of lived experiences of their forebearers as well their surrounding world, including the spirits of the dead and other spiritual entities. Each ritual event of importance infused new things into the process, while their ritualisation (e.g., relationship with a newly deceased) entailed the reliving of numerous emotion-charged previous events. Analogous representations, although stressed via seemingly trivial subject matters, for the participants revealed a spectra of identifications and emotions. Tobias' violent death generated new meanings, and ritually processed would become the source of signs to capture a multitude of new experiences. The point is that Tiwi did not simply deal with his death in a straightforward manner, but linked it with their cosmological existence, reshaping the event into cultural artefacts. To put it slightly differently, as a result of ritual elaboration the event of Tobias' killing was merged with the general theme of a symbolic killing and gained multilayered meanings to be extended in the encapsulation of future events (e.g., deaths of his relatives, other killings) and experiences (emotional reactions to death). Dealing with the killing of Tobias played upon the central ritual theme, albeit, as has been demonstrated above, with specific identifications.

This chapter has presented a number of Tiwi views and comments on the homicide as these were given in a ritual context. The expectations of some Tiwi people that the 'trouble' would be brought out, and that the names of the killers would be mentioned or that these person(s) would make

themselves known, did not come true. Kevin Wangiti, the man charged with murder by the police detectives, had been released on the eve of the Pularumpi yam ritual, which was therefore postponed a fortnight. In July he was put on trial and this time the final mortuary ritual for Tobias was postponed. What happened to Kevin and how the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system dealt with the homicide we will see in the next chapter.

7 'NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH'

7.1 Introduction

Up until this chapter I have discussed how the case unfolded over time in the local arena. In the twentieth century, however, the Tiwi have become increasingly subjected to the enforcement of Australian national law. Tobias' violent death was considered an offence against the state (the Crown) and, therefore, involvement of the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system was inevitable. In this chapter I shift attention to the police investigation and the case in the Australian criminal courts. The focus is on the interplay between the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system and local Tiwi dealings with the homicide.

Tobias' daughters decided to await the results of the murder trial before having the final mortuary ritual, so the alleged killers could eventually be flogged on the latter occasion. Who actually killed Tobias is not at issue here, but rather the different points of view within Tiwi society and, especially in this chapter, in the wider context of the Australian judicial system. What we have here is a remarkable contrast, as the police arrested a man who in view of the local Tiwi people had nothing to do with the killing.

The criminal justice system happens to be an important source of power over Aborigines for the dominant Anglo-Australian society (cf. Eggleston 1976). Aborigines are frequently prosecuted by the criminal justice system: they are overrepresented at all its stages (Fisher & Hennessy 1988: 91). Their imprisonment rate is the highest recorded in the world (Langton 1988: 201). In a recent study of Aboriginal youth and the criminal justice system, Gale, Bailey-Harris and Wundersitz state there is no proof Aboriginal youth commit more crimes than white youth, but as a result of social (class), cultural and racial bias the former receive harsher treatment by law-enforcement agencies, especially in the initial stages of criminal prosecution (1990: 6, 8). Both Eggleston in her pioneering work (1976) and the Australian Law Reform Commission (1986) stress that Aborigines are most vulnerable when involved in police interrogation, in the initial phase of criminal prosecution. Gale *et al.* demonstrate that the first step (whether a person is arrested by the police or not) in which Aborigines are treated differently has its detrimental effects for the persons in question (e.g., pre-trial detention, the more likely aquisition of a criminal record) in passing further into the criminal justice system (1990).

Kevin had been charged with the murder of Tobias Arapi. After preliminary hearings in the Courts of Summary Jurisdiction the magistrate was satisfied that the evidence against the alleged murderer was sufficient to put this man on trial. At the end of the murder trial, which lasted three weeks, in the Northern Territory Supreme Court the jury returned a verdict of 'not guilty'. The accused, more than nine months after Tobias' violent death, was a free man again. The verdict only meant his alleged guilt had not been proven 'beyond reasonable doubt'.[120] In Kevin's murder trial the all non-Aboriginal jurors were told to judge on the facts and to use common sense in reaching their verdict.

As Geertz (1983) points out, common sense might be seen as a cultural system. The 'facts' do not speak for themselves but have to be interpreted. Reasoning from common sense means that a whole body of cultural assumptions is taken for granted without being mentioned. When the logic and truths of Western common sense may be seen as culturally biased, can these, with the principle of fairness in mind, be extended to judge on the 'facts' belonging to a radically different cultural setting? Lakoff and Johnson state, '[i]t is because we understand *situations* in terms of our conceptual system that we can understand *statements* using that system of concepts as being *true*, that is, as fitting or not fitting the situation as we understand it' (1980: 179). Let me give one example. With regard to the record of interview with police, the underlying assumption is that *no one* will confess to a crime one has not committed. In Western common sense the consequences of such a confession will prevent an innocent person from admitting the crime.[121] Signing a confession as being true means one incriminates oneself, especially because as a suspect one has been cautioned beforehand by the investigating police. The record of interview is supposed to be an accurate or true representation. However, during police interrogation Aboriginal suspects appear to make confessions regardless of whether they did or *did not* commit the crime. The verbal warnings and the presence of a friend, as instructions to the police now require, *do not* prevent innocent Aboriginal suspects from confessing to the police. I will discuss this matter below. Aboriginal people with different conceptual systems from mainstream Australian society understand the world in a different way from white Australians. They have 'a very different body of truths' (ibid.: 181). Undoubtedly, it is the police's intention that justice will be done as they see it. In the case of Aboriginal suspects (and this accounts for other cultural minority groups too) the utmost care is needed, for, as Lakoff and Johnson write, 'the idea that there is absolute objective truth is not only mistaken but socially and politically dangerous' (ibid.: 159).[122]

As a result of the infringements of the Australian nation-state the Tiwi had to find other means to deal with a homicide. Although the Anglo-Australian courts may take so-called customary laws into consideration, this is mostly done at the end of the court proceedings and mainly involves sentencing (Bell 1988).

Interrogations by the police lead Aboriginal suspects to further involvement with the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system. Unlike the public hearings and communications in court, these interrogations take place in private. I will focus on the process of police interrogation, because at this stage Aborigines are the most vulnerable.[123]

7.2 Police investigation

In Chapter 4, I related how the police became involved soon after Tobias' body had been found in the Old Camp on October 29, 1988. The local police constable took statements from Tobias' neighbour Isaac and from Kevin, who had found the corpse. Tobias' natural son Mike, the Aboriginal police tracker, told him he had heard a conversation between Tobias and Kevin when coming from the Social Club the previous night. A coroner and a forensic pathologist were flown in from Darwin. The pathologist examined the corpse on the spot but did not detect the stab wounds at this stage. Then Tobias' body was taken to Darwin for an autopsy. The next day, the local police constable interviewed Simon Pamantari. Simon informed him that he had heard Isaac yelling after midnight and assumed because of the noise a fight had been going on in the Old Camp. On two occasions before the constable interrogated him, Simon had already attempted to hold an inquest but people refused to speak out. Simon said to me that it was better to 'let police have it' in order to prevent further bloodshed. The initial public reaction to Tobias' death by the local people in his intimate social networks ranged from denial to justification of the homicide. The victim's children from the two other townships, however, urged the killer of their father to come out.

On Monday morning, the constable received a phone call from Darwin in which he was told about the results of the post-mortem. This information came to the ear of the Aboriginal police tracker, who immediately went to the Old Camp to tell it to his 'sister', Tobias' daughter Laura. Tobias' children in the two other townships were informed. They came to Pularumpi for a meeting to decide how they would deal with the matter. It could no longer be denied that Tobias had been killed. In the white section of the community the story went that the police had a 'red-hot' suspect. The local police cordoned off the scene of the crime again. No one was allowed in the Old Camp.

Early in the afternoon, two police detectives of Darwin's Criminal Investigations Branch (CIB) and a coroner arrived to investigate the killing. Significant relatives of Tobias from Nguiu, including his 'father' Jack and his elder 'brothers' Bruce and Steven, had come to Pularumpi for a meeting with the bereaved children. Around 4.15 p.m. the detectives organised a line search of the Old Camp in order to find the murder weapon. The search, restricted to the Old Camp, did not find a weapon corresponding in size to the stab wounds. Isaac had to demonstrate in the Old Camp what his

movements had been on the night of the killing. He was sent to the police station for an interrogation. The onlookers were reluctant to talk to the police detectives. Afterwards in the Social Club the Aboriginal police tracker told his relatives, including Tobias' children from other places, in great detail about the stab wounds that had caused Tobias' death.

In a search of the houses in the Old Camp the local police constable located a sharp skinning knife in the hut of the white sailor and Tobias' daughter Laura. The knife was seized as evidence.

Isaac Pamantari was interrogated by the detectives for ninety minutes. A younger clan brother acted as an interpreter. The lengthy interrogation was summarised in a short statement. Contradicting his previous statement to the local police constable, that he had been asleep and had heard no noises or fights, his statement now was that Tobias had come to him:

> Last Friday night I went to the club. I was drunk when the club closed and I went straight home. I didn't have supper, I just laid down in the kitchen behind my house. It was late when that dead man [an expression employed to circumvent the name taboo - ev] sang out to me. I went outside and talk to him. It was just drunk talk. He was drunk too. We were arguing but we did not have a fight. We were arguing. I can't remember what we were talking about I kept telling him to go home. I went back inside to sleep and that dead man was talking to himself. I do not know who stabbed that dead man. I went back to sleep and did not hear anything until Kevin came and got me in the morning. (Statement to the police, 1.11.1988)[124]

The detectives appeared to find this statement satisfactory.

They started a series of interrogations of local people at the police station. The detectives interviewed over two days an estimated 50 people who were brought to them by the Aboriginal police tracker. Their aim was to eliminate 'possible suspects' one by one. Statements of the card players revealed men's voices had been heard, including Tobias' voice, in the Old Camp on the night of the killing. The raised voices of two other persons had been recognised too. These were the voices of Isaac and Anna. Anna was brought in from Milikapiti, where she had gone because of the 'trouble'. Nancy coordinated the statements the members of Sam's camp would make to the police. She and her husband Sam would state they had been drunk and had gone home from the social club. Before her interrogation, Anna discussed with Nancy and I what she would say to the police. She had been drunk too. Nancy's son Mike, the police tracker, had walked her home from the club to Sam's camp.

Following a reconstruction of his movements on the night of the killing made with the detectives on Tuesday morning, Mike declared he had come from the club. He found his parents at his sister Maud's house having supper.[125] Thereafter, he went back to the club. Tobias, Anna and three other people were still sitting there. Mike took Anna with him. They walked along the path behind the health clinic, where they stopped for a little while. When they came behind Kevin's hut, so Mike told the police, he heard a conversation that sounded normal between Kevin and Tobias, assuming the

latter had come in front of the health clinic. Anna left Mike and went in the direction of Kevin's voice, singing to herself. Mike walked past the hut where his parents lived and saw they were not yet at home. Then, to get to his own house, he had to cross the main road to the barge landing. Mike could see some people standing under the street light near Alan's house, waiting for a card game to start. It is important to note that Mike said he had *heard* Kevin and Tobias talking. Under cross-examination during the murder trial he admitted he could only tell for sure he had heard Tobias and was much less certain about the other voice. Having been on the other side of the buildings, he clearly did *not see* them, and he could not recall whether the lights were on or off.

The detectives learned from a bar keeper of mixed descent that Tobias had been on bad terms with a number of people. The main ones Tobias argued with were Karl Hansen who lived with his daughter Laura, with whom he argued over money and food; Andrew Munuluka, because Tobias was an amorous suitor of Andrew's wife; and Sam Kerimerini concerning some family trouble.[126] Simon had stated to the local police constable that Tobias, before the local police station was established, had speared his brother in the back when both were drunk. He said the killings with spears had ceased to exist. In the past, according to Simon, tribal killings were carried out with spears only. It was a matter of 'the old men and the family'. Laura told the detective in charge that her father had had fights, 'only fist fights', with Isaac. These fights occurred in the Social Club about a month before Tobias' death. The police obtained a wet pair of shorts from Isaac. He claimed he had worn these on the night of the killing. The pair of shorts, with a stain on them, had just been washed. The coroner or crime scene examiner took the shorts with him. During the murder trial the coroner claimed he had also taken a swab of blood from Tobias' verandah.

The police interrogations brought a number of conflicts between Tobias and other people to light, although most people were reluctant to speak to police. The detectives had a short list of suspects. As the investigation went on, one after another was eliminated from this list until by Tuesday afternoon only one person was left. The remaining suspect happened to be Kevin, a bachelor who lived in the Old Camp not far from Tobias. He had found Tobias lying under the mango tree on Saturday morning. The police knew that Kevin had driven the car that rolled over and killed Tobias' last wife in 1988. They inferred that there was animosity between Tobias and Kevin regarding Tobias' wife's death. From hearsay the detectives believed that Tobias had said to Kevin, 'I kill you with an axe'.

After repeated interrogations, Kevin went with the police to the beach and produced a knife from the sand. He finally confessed to having killed Tobias. He was charged with the murder and put in prison on Tuesday, November 1, at 10 p.m. The detectives halted their investigation.

No attempt was succesfully made to relate the knife to the stab wounds other than its size. A police forensic biologist examined the knife but only found traces of sand and grit, no blood. It must be noted that numerous

knives of this type could be found in the local community, as they are used in hunting and eating. Even toddlers used to play with these. The detectives thus heavily relied on Kevin's confessional record of interview with the police. In the case of Aboriginal suspects a reliance on a confessional record of interview with the police is very problematic.

As a result of experiences in the past, Australian judges have become more cautious concerning confessions made by Aborigines. A number of rules have been formulated to serve as safeguards and to determine whether such confessions will be admissible as evidence in the criminal courts. Investigating police have to apply these so-called Anunga Rules (see below) or run the risk that the confession they obtained may be rejected as evidence by the judge. A general principle of Australian law is that people do not have to incriminate themselves; therefore, the rules of evidence say a confession or relevant statement has to be voluntarily given. The police first have to caution the persons in question that they have the right to remain silent, and that anything they say might be used against them as evidence in court. Chrisholm and Nettheim note, 'The police sometimes complain that these strict requirements hamstring investigation of crime, that innocent persons have nothing to fear in speaking up, and that the rules protect only the guilty by warning them to say nothing' (1974: 66). This being the case, the application of the Anunga Rules concerning Aboriginal suspects complicates matters for the investigating police even more. Despite the best intentions of the investigating police, a great deal can go wrong in their communications with Aborigines.[127] The same accounts for Aborigines in court (cf. Liberman 1981). The present case points to difficulties due to language problems, cultural miscommunication, the stress of the situation (experienced differently by Aborigines, including the strain of loyalities to other people which are not understood by non-Aboriginal people), unfamiliarity with the local way of life on the part of the white officials, unfamiliarity with the court rituals on the part of the Aborigines, and fears - as experienced and perceived - of the powers of the police. Tiwi people regard white police officers as 'dangerous persons' (*mantatawi*). Even when the Anunga Rules are applied, and this seems not to happen in all cases, the decision as to whether the caution is understood by the Aboriginal suspect is still left to the discretion of the interrogating police officer. I will cite three examples that put the reliability of confessional records of interview with Aboriginal suspects into question, then I will discuss of how Kevin's confession to the murder came into being.

At the end of 1988, during the trial of a Tiwi man who was eventually acquitted of sexual assault, Justice Maurice of the Northern Territory Supreme Court warned the jury to be wary of statements made by the accused in a record of interview with police. 'The level of miscommunication in the record of interview produced quite comical results', he said. 'It would be a joke if this man's liberty did not depend on it' (*Northern Territory News*, 8.3.1989). When Justice Maurice was

speaking, another Tiwi man in Darwin's Berrimah jail was awaiting the committal hearings whereafter he would face a murder trial, concerning Tobias' violent death, in the NT Supreme Court. The case of the Crown against Kevin Wangiti also rested mainly on a confession, one made in a record of interview with police.

The justices of the NT Supreme Court are aware of the problems Aborigines face in the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system. Chief Justice Foster set down guidelines for police officers in the interrogation of Aboriginal suspects in *Regina versus Anunga* in 1976. Three years later, the NT Police Commissioner made these so-called Anunga Rules known as instructions to all police officers in the Northern Territory (Foley 1988: 174-8). These rules tell interrogating police that Aboriginal suspects must be accompanied by 'a prisoner's friend' chosen by the suspect, and that the caution of one's right to remain silent and not to incriminate oneself must be understood. These preconditions, however, are not enough. The rules further say, 'Even when an apparently frank and free confession has been obtained relating to the commission of an offence, police should continue to investigate the matter in an endeavour to obtain proof of the commission of the offence from other sources' (Foley 1988: 175). Failure to apply the Anunga Rules may lead to the rejection of confessional records of interview as evidence in court. This happened to the Tiwi man acquitted of sexual assault mentioned above. In general, according to Loorham, the rules have not been met enthusiastically by the NT police force. To them 'the rules are a nuisance and there is much pressure from the Force to have them watered down' (1982: 4).

A lack of police enthusiasm is understandable because the Anunga Rules make it more difficult to take action against Aboriginal suspects. Following Tobias' death, probably caused by a stab wound to his chest, the detectives and the crime scene examiner were sent to Melville Island to solve the case. It is likely they were working under strong institutional pressures. Nevertheless, with regard to instructions to the police and in the interest of the judicial principle of fairness, to mention at least some basic considerations the detectives were supposed to show in their dealings with Aboriginal suspects, I find it hard to grasp why these experienced police detectives placed so much confidence in a confessional record of interview. Their reliance on a confession to the murder is clearly demonstrated by the failure of the detectives 'to obtain proof of the commission of the offence from other sources', as would have been in line with the Anunga Rules. It is well known, especially in legal circles, that Aboriginal suspects tend to give in to pressures exerted on them by investigating police.

Loorham reports about Kumajay's case, in which a young Aboriginal man confessed to a rape in a 'long, detailed and apparently credible record of interview'. At his committal hearing, however, the prosecutor, 'under cross-examination by the Counsel for the accused, admitted she had made the story up' (ibid.: 3-4). Another case in point is Kevin Condren, an Aboriginal man from Queensland jailed for life in 1984 for the murder of a

woman, 'mainly on the basis of a confession to police he claims was fabricated.' Fresh evidence revealed that at the time the murder occurred Condren was in police custody, arrested for drunkenness (*The Australian*, 22.12.1989). Indeed, one might wonder with Loorham (1982: 4) how reliable the record of interview is.[128]

Kevin had made a statement to the local police constable on Saturday, October 29. He told how he had found Tobias early in the morning and had warned the health worker. He had gone to the Social Club to drink beer the night before. There he had seen Tobias alive for the last time. 'Last night I stayed at the club until it was finished', he said, 'Then I went to Dick's for supper and then I came home. I went to sleep as soon as I got home' (Statement to the police, 29.10.1988).

The detective sergeant in charge of the investigation went through this statement with Kevin on Monday, October 31. Kevin 'agreed that he made that statement and its contents were true and correct.' In a declaration (dated on December 5 and 8, 1988) this detective presented his interviews with Kevin in the form of answers and questions. After going over the statement he posed only the following question to Kevin: 'Did you see the dead man [Tobias] after you left the club on Friday night?' Kevin replied, 'No, I went to Dick's for supper and then went home to bed, I didn't see him.'

The next morning the detective spoke to Kevin again at the police station (I cite once again the detective's declaration, which was later read out in court):

> 'Kevin I have been told by someone that on Friday night after the club closed you were seen talking to that dead man at your house.'
> 'Who told you that.'
> 'That doesn't matter, were you talking to him.'
> 'No I had supper at Dick's and went home and went to bed.'
> 'Did you see the dead man.'
> 'No.'

He had now told the police his story three times and he kept to it. Kevin was told he was *seen* talking to Tobias. This was false information on part of the police, as the Aboriginal police tracker had told the local constable he had *heard* a conversation between Kevin and Tobias (referred to as 'the dead man'). Voice identification, of course, is much more troublesome than sight.[129] The allegation must have been an unsettling experience for Kevin. He could infer someone in the community held a grudge against him, and that the police apparently did not believe him. At this stage he was not allowed to know who was speaking against him.[130] This, however, is extremely important because Tiwi, ideally, have 'to speak up' for their 'relations' (*aramipi*, people belonging to their exogamous cluster of matriclans), no matter what their personal opinion is.

We might safely assume Kevin did not know what he was up against. On Saturday morning he had found a knife in a box in his hut. It was not his

knife, he was sure. He took it with him to the house of a friend elsewhere in the township. Kevin went to another house because the area where Tobias died had become taboo (*pukamani*), and, therefore, he was not allowed to stay in his own hut. There is a cultural imperative to move away from the place where a death has recently occurred, a taboo related to the possible destructive actions of the new spirit of the dead or *mopaditi*. In contrast to another neighbour of Tobias, Kevin had slept in his own hut during the night of the killing. This suggests he had been unaware of Tobias' death. Had he known about it he presumably would have moved away to somewhere else, like he did for the following nights.[131] The police, unfamiliar with Tiwi mortuary practices, overlooked this point. Kevin knew the police had been looking in the Old Camp for knives. The detective had made it plainly clear there were suspicions about him. Kevin took the knife he had in his possession to the beach and buried it on his favourite place for fishing. The township of 300 was in a state of tension. Tobias' children were pressing people to speak out and threatening a counter-killing. The interrogations at the police station, for which anybody could be picked up at any time, disrupted people's daily routines. My friends feared a confrontation in private with the unknown white policemen. Some people hid themselves when the police van was coming their way. Kevin was a man who suffered from high blood pressure.

At 1.15 p.m. Kevin was called into the police station for the second time that day. This time the other CIB detective interrogated him. The detective reported the interview in a declaration (dated on December 19, 1988), again in a question and answer fashion. The detective in charge was said to be present during the interrogation and would take over later on. Here below will I cite the detective's declaration (also read in court). Once again Kevin was asked to confirm his statement. Then he was questioned about his movements on Friday night. The detective asked him what he did after he finished at the club:

> 'Then what did you do.'
> 'I walked down to my friends and had some supper.'
> 'What were the friends name.'.'
> 'From there where did you go.'
> 'After I had supper I went straight home. Camped at my place. Shut the door and went to sleep.' (Question marks were omitted througout this written declaration of detective in charge, typed down a month after the date of the interrogation.)

After this the detective started it all over again, questioning Kevin in more detail. Kevin said he had supper at Dick's house. When asked who was at the house, he mentioned Dick, and Dick's wife and children in addition. From a statement of Dick's wife to the local constable it had become clear that Dick was not at home when Kevin visited. The answer would be in accordance with local understanding if he meant 'Dick' or 'Dick mob', since a camp (house and yard) is referred to by using the name of the most significant person in the group that lives there, whether this person is present or not

(which is also more convenient in view of the recurring fluctuations in group membership). Indeed, his answers to the next questions indicate there was some miscommunication between Kevin and the detective: 'Who else.'; 'His wife.'; 'What is her name.'; 'Sally and the kids.' Obviously, 'Sally and the kids' was not the woman's name, but she and her children belonged to Dick's household. Once they thought the interviewee told them Dick was at home, the police assumed Kevin 'began to tell lies' (the local police constable, personal communication). Still, Kevin did not confess to the murder. On the question of where he went afterwards, he repeated what he had already told the police six times: 'Went straight home, shut the door and went to sleep.' Asked if he then had talked with Tobias, Kevin again responded in the negative and said he did not see him. Next, the interrogator put questions to him indicating his statements were false. Kevin did not reply to these questions.

First, the detective said, 'Kevin, other people have told me that Dick wasn't home, he was on Bathurst Island that night. Do you want to say anything about that.' The detective had it wrong. Dick had not been on Bathurst Island that Friday. He went to Milikapiti on Melville Island, and he came home around 9 p.m.

Second, he told Kevin that Sally Pamantari had told him (as a matter of fact, she made her statement to the local police constable) she gave Kevin some meat but he did not stay at her home. Kevin had never said that he did not. Sally had said Kevin went home after he stayed at her place for a little while. Apparently, the detective assumed that when Kevin had supper at Dick's house he ate it there. Kevin, however, took his supper with him to eat at his own place. The detective, unfamiliar with the local way of life, apparently inferred Kevin had told him a lie, because to have supper at Dick's house he would have to stay there longer than he admitted he did.

Third, the detective told Kevin that Mavis Pamantari had said that after he left Sally he called at her house. According to Mavis (his clan sister), Kevin had come to her house, carrying a plastic bag, and received some food from her at his request. This was such a humdrum thing for Kevin that he took it for granted. From a Tiwi point of view, it was commonplace that he asked his relatives, his 'daughter' Sally and his 'sister' Mavis, for some food.[132] What he had explained earlier to the police were his *directional* movements on Friday night. From the club, instead of to his hut in the Old Camp (to the south), he walked down with his 'daughter' to her place (to the west). There he played with his 'grandchildren', did 'stop there' as Tiwi say, and obtained some meat as his supper from Sally. Then walking past Mavis' place (somewhat further back to the west) he in passing demanded some food from her as well. Following the rule of brother-sister avoidance they hardly spoke with each other. After this triviality he 'went straight home' (in a straight line to the east). In his statements Kevin had been true to his sense of movements but the detective was under the impression he had held something back deliberately. It was not the first instance in which they were talking past each other.

Finally, this detective told Kevin, 'Mike has told me that he saw you speaking with that dead man [Tobias] late that night. Do you want to say anything about that.' As I said earlier, Mike had said he had *heard* them talking. The detective did not specify what time was 'late that night'; I will discuss the issue of exactness of time below. Kevin chose to remain silent to these questions. In Tiwi ways, he could not contradict the supposed statements of his relatives. The Tiwi people referred to by the detective were his 'daughter' Sally (FFSSD), his clan sister Mavis, and his clan brother Mike. With a positive response to the misleading propositions Kevin would also unjustly compromise himself and his earlier statements to the police.

In his trial Kevin testified that the detective hit him three times at the back of his head and pressed him to 'tell the truth'. Given the powers of the police, as perceived and experienced, it takes a lot of courage for an Aboriginal person to deliver such testimony. The police denied the alleged violence. It was the word of the accused against that of the police officers (see also Eggleston 1976: 30, 57-8). Anyhow, Justice Rice rejected Kevin's evidence and accepted the version of the police on this topic.

The pressure on Kevin, and this was beyond police's ken, was that he was isolated from other Tiwi people. In this face-to-face society social reality is defined in a collective process; what one says in public is consented to by other people, especially one's 'relations'. People who go their own way, alone and by themselves, are out of touch with reality. They are perceived as mad, 'no good in the head' (with the exemption of a 'magic man'). In ordinary Tiwi individuals, loneliness inspires fear. As Sansom puts it in connection with Aboriginal fringe dwellers in Darwin, 'It is a short trip from company into fright' (1980: 209). Loneliness here implies being without other people on whom one depends in defining a situation. Sansom quotes the African Chagga, who have an expression for this that can be translated as 'to talk out of fear'. Paraphrasing Steiner, he writes, 'For them, loneliness is when the familiar man-worked material things of one's immediate surroundings become an animated reproach and live for one because one's fellows no longer do. And their animation is no comfort. Left on his own, the Chagga householder finds that "the posts of my house are hitting me"' (1980: 208-9). For Tiwi this is also the case, for instance, in unfamiliar rooms, especially small rooms with the doors closed.[133] The Tiwi have a term for a policeman, and it is likely it reflects the dreadful encounter being on one's own; *imenipirni* or 'he hit me'. This reasoning suggests Kevin might have perceived the allegations that his relatives contradicted him as so many blows at the back of his head. Therewith, the versions of both the white police and their Aboriginal suspect were true. In other words, the detective may not have physically assaulted Kevin but Kevin experienced the reality of an assault.[134] (Likewise, Tiwi experience the loss of a significant other as a physical attack on their body.) One can imagine what a Tiwi person must feel when alone, without the comfort of his or her own, under police interrogation. An Aboriginal suspect, if the

pressure is upheld long enough, will say anything to get out of this stressful situation. Sansom, on the basis of his research among Aboriginal fringe dwellers, found,

> What policemen may in such circumstances do is inculpate a man, bind him in the tangled sayings of his loneliness. The structure of the situation dictates that in order to escape "You gotta talk fast" and "You gotta gib themfella lotta bloody humbug"; and the purpose of fast talking and humbug is to get away - escape (1980: 209).

In this context, the right of an Aboriginal suspect to remain silent is a misnomer.

The sergeant detective in charge took over the interrogation of Kevin from his colleague. He told Kevin, 'Mike told me that when he was walking home from the club you were talking to that dead man [Tobias].' Kevin did not reply. Next, the detective asked him if he had got any knives he had not seen. Kevin did not reply. The detective repeated the last question. Now Kevin said, 'That one that killed the dead man.' It is impossible to tell from the written declaration whether this utterance by the suspect was meant as an addition to what the detective stated, a question as to what knife he wanted to see, or an affirmative answer. Obviously, the officer was after the murder weapon.

It has often been argued that Aborigines are unassertive when confronted with authorities (this is one of the reasons underlying the Anunga Rules, cf. Foley 1988: 175). To put it slightly differently, Aborigines tend to say what they think, from gesture and intonation of voice, a person in authority wants to hear. Explanations given in the literature for this phenomenon are:

- politeness on their part (Coldrey 1987: 87),
- lack of personal confidence in the questioner (Strehlow 1936: 334; Elkin 1947: 179-80),
- their powerlessness and lack of comprehension of what they are agreeing with (Elkin 1947: 179; Liberman 1981: 249; Coldrey ibid.),
- disadvantages due to language problems, cultural differences, ill health (e.g., many Aborigines suffer from hearing loss), and illiteracy in varying degrees (Foley 1988: 164-71; Australian Law Reform Commission 1986: 56),
- the strain of the situation (Sansom 1980: 208-10, see above),
- a strategy of accomodation playing on Anglo-Australian aspirations to be superior (Elkin 1947: 176-7; Liberman 1981: 248-9), and also to avoid trouble (Strehlow 1936: 334).
- and as a feature of the way Aborigines communicate, preferably not contradicting others (Liberman 1981; cf. Von Sturmer 1981).

These explanations do not exclude each other. Liberman, focusing on the problem of communication and discourse, in relation to Western Desert Aborigines states,

> Individuals do not assert themselves or their points of view too vigorously, but maintain a self-deprecatory manner which emphasizes the importance of group cohesiveness over individual aims. Competitive arguments are discouraged, and Aborigines avoid directly contradicting others in order to prevent their embarrassment. (...) Question and answer sentences are rarely as intensive as similar discourse among Anglo-Australians. Generally, it may be said that interaction among Aboriginal people is unassertive. The round-the-rally production of consensual decisions does not proceed according to a variety of alternatives; rather, one possible solution is formulated at a given time and elaborated or amended over the ensuing course of talk. Unpopular formulations die a death of silence (1981: 248).

We have seen Kevin did not contradict the alleged statements of his relatives but remained silent. When the other detective took over the interrogation and asked if he had other knives, Kevin complied with the intention of that question, namely the murder weapon being asked for. The already suspicious detectives put much weight on Kevin's assertion. Kevin pointed out he had a knife that was buried at the beach. He was not cautioned when the next question, incriminating when affirmed, was put to him; 'Do you know anything about how that old man was killed.' Kevin did not reply. Thereafter, he said he buried the knife. It must have looked to Kevin as if he had compromised himself, for the detective asked, 'How did you know it was the one that killed the dead man?' I take this as an invention on part of the police, albeit not one deliberately made. The accuracy of the detective's statement can be disputed on the grounds that until then there was no evidence Kevin's knife had been the lethal weapon indeed. The reading of Kevin's previous answer, 'That one that killed the dead man', is all-important here. Following the detective's apparent understanding Kevin admitted he had a knife that could be identified as the lethal weapon. But this is anything but clear. As I said earlier, it was obvious the detective was after the lethal knife, the so-called murder weapon. The previous day, the police with the involvement of Tiwi people had conducted a line search of the Old Camp for that purpose. The detectives had been asking about a knife of certain dimensions. What Kevin was doing, in my opinion, was helping the police: he did not feign ignorance about the detective's interest in the knife 'that killed the dead man' (which would render him suspect) but asserted this knowledge by giving a specification of the proposition ('any knives I haven't seen') put to him by the detective, and inviting him to guess. Finally, after repeated silences he could say something unharmful. As Von Sturmer points out, 'Aborigines are very aware of personal dignity and suffer its loss badly' (1981: 17). One might assume Kevin did not want to appear inadequate (cf. Coldrey 1987: 87).[135] Furthermore, Liberman makes clear that 'Aborigines are engaged in a continual process of sense-assembly in court' (1981: 247), and the situation for Aborigines under police interrogation may even be worse (ibid.: 255). Unfamiliar with the structure of the proceedings, they tend to be confused and do not know what they are up against. Therefore, they are constantly on the lookout for clues about what is going on. In conjunction with the strategy of accomodation mentioned above, Aborigines frequently comply with what is put to them, either in verbal or non-verbal

communication, as well as from their horizon of reference. What was the purpose of this question, 'any knives I haven't seen'? Kevin responded, 'That one that killed the dead man.' (Again, question marks were omitted in the written account.) The trap, set by the detectives unwittingly, snapped.

Upon Kevin's silence the detective asked for the second time, 'How did you know it was the one that killed the dead man.' It is possible, and I believe this was the case, that hitherto Kevin did not link the hypothetical 'murder weapon' with the knife he had. One thing was he made clear he understood, or wanted to know if he understood, the detective meant the knife with which Tobias had been killed. The other thing was 'other knives', plural. It is likely that this amounted to confusion, forcing Kevin to search for the significance of this rather complicated proposition. Kevin admitted he had an *other* knife. Ready to assist the police, he was prepared to point out where it was. By silence he disapproved of the question, 'Do you know anything about how that old man was killed.'[136] The next question was, 'Kevin who buried the knife.' Whereupon he said, 'I did.' Then the detective asked the, in my reading, leading question, 'How did you know it was the one that killed the dead man.' All of a sudden, the buried knife was the one that killed. What was worse, the first or the second part, 'know' or 'killed'? Impaired by his lack of fluency in standard Australian English and by a total disregard of non-verbal behaviour, Kevin was caught in a web. How did this make sense? Kevin said, 'I know.'

Kevin was first asked to consent to showing the detective the knife and then was told by the detective that he would 'tell the judge about that.' Accompanied by four policemen, Kevin was taken to the beach, where he dug out the knife. Kevin declared, 'I use it for fishing sometimes.' His burial of the knife (at the base of a tree) might seem an awkward thing to do, but for the Tiwi people putting away an object where you could find it again so it was at hand for use was a standard procedure to prevent such a tool from getting lost. On Sunday, Kevin had been fishing at the beach. He favoured the spot for his hand-line fishing, and he needed a knife to cut up the bait.

Kevin was on the hook, so to speak, and the policemen returned with him to the police station. There the interrogators shifted to the courtroom.

Let me interpose a comment on this new setting. This setting very much matched the fortnightly sessions of the Court of Summary Jurisdiction in the room. In this court there were a magistrate and a prosecutor (usually a police sergeant) in civil attire, and the local police officers in uniform who served as the staff of the court. The detective sergeant (the one who had said to Kevin he would 'tell the judge about that') and the other detective were in civil attire too. The detective in charge of the investigation, the highest in rank, gave orders to the local police officers dressed in uniform. Dick would be Kevin's 'prisoner's friend' (an ackward term suggesting the suspect was a prisoner, which he was not). Dick had been brought to the police station together with his wife by the local police. He was called into the courtroom. The detective constable asked Kevin why Dick was present.

Kevin said, 'Because he is a witness.' I cite from the Record of Interview with the police (November 1, 1988, p. 1). The detective, 'What is a witness?'; Kevin, 'For the murder.' The detective, 'I mean why is Dick Pamantari sitting here?'; Kevin, 'To help me.'[137] Given the close resemblance of the whole setting with a performance of the local court, Kevin might easily have had the false impression that a court procedure was taking place (the only person lacking was a solicitor to his defence), if not an actual session of the court.

In trying to make sure the caution would be understood by Kevin, the detective told him: 'Mr. Wangiti, I am now going to explain some things to you, and after I explain things to you I am going to ask you to tell me what I have said.' Kevin phrased his understanding as follows, 'You're going to ask me things, then I can say them back to you.' It might have not been clear to him that this was intended to caution him, and it might have opened him up even more to say what he thought the detective wanted to hear. The detective told him he would type everything down on a piece of paper and take it to the court. (Months later, Kevin asked me to explain to him the court proceedings, of which he understood little.) What did the detective mean? How confusing! Were they not in the court? Asked by the detective what the court was, he replied, 'Going to jail. For the murder.' After the interrogation, in which Kevin confessed to killing Tobias, the typed version of the record of interview was read back. I assume the interrogators shifted to the courtroom because there was tape-recording equipment, but they did not record the actual confessional interview on tape. Only afterwards, a so-called 'read back' was recorded on tape. Kevin and Dick signed the record of interview as being true.

I want to represent the suspect's side of the story, as to what in his perception had occurred during the procedure of police interrogation. This representation is based on my frequent conversations with Dick and Kevin, as well as on their statements in the Darwin courts. Dick, as the 'prisoner's friend', was allowed to have a chat with Kevin in Tiwi before the local courtroom interrogation commenced. Kevin said to Dick, 'I turned myself in' and 'I blamed myself'. He used the expression *imenipirni*, 'he hit me', for the police detective. Dick later asserted this in court. Kevin further told him he did not kill the old man. According to Kevin, Dick said to him he 'shouldn't do it', that is, having turned himself in. In a spontaneous conversation in which Kevin brought up the topic, he said to me, 'They kept telling me to tell the truth.' After some further deliberations by Kevin I asked him why he had made the confession to the police. He said, 'They didn't believe me. Kept telling, telling... [making the sign of ongoing repetition]... pushing [accompanied by a sign of pushing, and then inserting with altered voice:] "Tell truth!".' Kevin added, 'You can't win.'

Unfortunately, Kevin's experiences are not unusual. Andrew Ligertwood, a lawyer who worked for Aborigines in South Australia, reports he 'had little success in preventing suspects confessing to the police, despite my most strenuous assertion (...) of their right to remain silent'

(1988: 197). He states that 'Aboriginal suspects will usually agree submissively to propositions put to them. The police do little to avoid this tendency and *virtually all* defendants confess to the crimes alleged against them' (ibid.: 196, my emphasis). And John Coldrey, a Queen's Counsel with a wide experience of criminal cases involving Aborigines and Director of Public Prosecutions for Victoria, writes,

> Even when the Aboriginal suspect comprehends the questions being put to him there remains the tendency to give an answer that reflects what he thinks the questioner desires to hear. Later when confronted with answers that are clearly erroneous the suspect will say in explanation: 'He forced me to say those things' or 'He made me talk too fast'. (1987: 87)

The provision of a 'prisoner's friend' will be of little help to the suspect when this person is subjected to the same pressures, and therefore is also unassertive in dealing with the interrogating police.

I will be brief in my further discussion of the confessional interview because the main point has been made. When the subject of the knife was raised, the record of interview began to take the form of a confession:

> * What else can you tell me about that knife?
> That knife was still there at my camp.
> * When? [Earlier on the interrogating detective had spoken about 'the night that that dead fella finished up'.]
> On that night.
> * Which night was that?
> Friday night.
> * Did anything happen on Friday night?
> Yes.
> * What?
> I had an argument with that dead fellow?[138]
> (Record of Interview, November 1, 1988, p. 4)

The admission of the events leading up to the killing came out step-by-step in short answers on questions of the what-happened-then type. The crucial question, of course, was where Kevin eventually stabbed the victim:

> * Where did you stab him?
> (No answer.)
> * I am giving you this pen, can you show me where you stabbed that dead fellow?
> ([Kevin] Indicates top left hand side of chest, Left hand side of back, top of left shoulder and top of left leg. Holds pen in the right hand.)
> (Ibid., p. 10)

That was it. The police were convinced only 'the murderer' could know the location of the stab wounds (the local senior constable, personal communication). However, this information was common knowledge in the local Tiwi community by then. Kevin repeated the supposed knowledge of a wound in the back in his confession.

The situation looked grim for Kevin. He was arrested and charged with the murder. If he was convicted for murder he could get a life sentence. The

law of the Northern Territory takes this very literally: he would stay in jail until the day he died (Bell 1988: 368; Chamberlain 1990).

The CIB detectives had arrived in Pularumpi on Monday, 2.15 p.m. The next day at 10.00 p.m., Kevin was lodged in the local cells. The detectives went off-duty.

They got on the first plane back to Darwin, taking their prisoner with them. Three months later, the prisoner was brought back to Pularumpi for a day to attend the Court of Summary Jurisdiction for the first part of his committal hearings in the room where he had made his confession to the police.

7.3 Preliminary court hearings

On February 2, 1989, the first session of the committal hearings was held at the local court. The previous day I had met Anna Wangiti in Milikapiti. She was terrified, for she had to be one of the witnesses. It troubled her. Anna wanted to know from me if it would be all right if she would tell what she confided to me. Back in Pularumpi I was told Isaac and Sally, two other witnesses, were 'chasing'. They had been ordered to the police station to sign a piece of paper stating that they would not leave the township. Sally and Mavis, also scared to death, said to my wife and I that this was the first time in their lives they had 'to go court'.

In the main office of the police station the Crown prosecutor, Peter Murphy, described the committal hearings to me as a 'jigsaw puzzle'. The first part, involving the Tiwi witnesses, would be heard in Pularumpi. He warned me not to think this was the whole case. The second part of the matter, the other pieces of his puzzle, would be heard from the police officers in Darwin. The police theory, he explained to me, was that the victim had threatened the accused because he had caused his wife's death. The accused feared a 'payback'. To prevent this happening he killed Tobias. Upon my expressions of doubt, he said, 'Kevin is not the kind of person who deserves any mercy.'

Kevin was brought into the police station unshaven and wearing a crumpled blouse and a threadbare pair of shorts. (Kevin was the kind of person who was always clean-shaven, to the extent that he borrowed my gear when he needed it, and spotless in his clothing.) His lawyer arrived later and met him there for the first time. The solicitor, a non-Aboriginal man, appeared not to be fluent in the English language. He spoke softly (quite a number of Aborigines were a bit hard of hearing as a result of ear infections).

The court case greatly interested Tiwi people. Tobias' daughters had come from Milikapiti to learn more about the circumstances of their father's death. Other people had come to be supportive of the witnesses. Kevin's relatives, although they also expressed that they felt uncomfortable, had turned up to see him. Most of the people remained outside the courtroom on

the verandah. First, there were a few other cases in the court. One of the witnesses became annoyed because he had to be present at the police station at 9.30 a.m. The court case did not begin, however, before 1.30 p.m. The Crown presented the first half of its case against Kevin. Nine Tiwi witnesses, one after the other, were called in:

The first two witnesses were the barmen in the Social Club on the night of the killing. The first one gave a deep sigh when it was over, the second bathed in his sweat. They had to tell how drunk the victim and Kevin were.

Sally, the next witness, had to say a few things about when Kevin paid a visit to her place that night.

Then Mavis was questioned. The prosecutor seemed to want her to put at ease by asking her Aboriginal name. The name was taboo and, therefore, she replied 'Too hard'. Her attempts to make clear she could not talk with Kevin because of a brother-sister avoidance rule were wasted on the court, despite her testimony that 'He is my brother. I cannot speak to him...culture, you know...'

The police tracker came next. Magistrate Hook appeared surprised when Kevin's solicitor, instead of saying 'No, Your Worship' again, wanted to cross-examine this witness. The tracker said that when he brought Kevin to the police station in the car, Kevin had said: 'I didn't do it.'[139]

Anna stated that she had been drunk. The tracker had her walked home from the club and left her there.

The court rituals were certainly confusing to Isaac. When he was sworn in, a bible was put in his hands; moving the book from one side to the other, he was at a loss what to do with it. The magistrate could not understand a word of what he said to the prosecutor, and told the latter he needed an interpreter. A younger clan brother of the witness (who had also been present when he made a statement to the police) volunteered. He said that in the night of the killing Tobias kept bothering him while he wanted to sleep.

The following witness, the health worker, was very fluent in English. He said, 'On that night I had been watching a movie on television before I came out on the street lights just outside my house where a game of cards was in progress and I stayed there for a while during which time I heard voices of two people which I identified.' These were the voices of the two previous witnesses. He remarked, 'I don't recall hearing the conversation that was carried'. He further said Kevin had asked him the next morning 'to come to go and have a look at the body of the deceased to see what was wrong and because he thought he may be dead.'[140]

Simon Pamantari was the last witness. After a number of questions had been put to him the prosecutor turned to the magistrate: The prosecutor suggested an interpreter would be of assistance. The magistrate adjourned for a little while to give him the opportunity to get one. Nothing was said to the witness. People were leaving the courtroom. For Simon the situation was baffling. 'It's finished now?', he asked a few times but there came no answer. After the break and the second part of Simon's testimony, the local part of these committal proceedings came to an end.

Before he adjourned the matter until the next hearings, the magistrate made a comment on the proceedings: 'I'm totally unimpressed with what's happened here today.' He told the Crown prosecutor he ought to have provided 'proper interpreters' for 'a good number' of the witnesses.[141]

On February 13, 1989, the second session of hearings convened at the Darwin Court of Summary Jurisdiction. Tobias' daughter Heather had come to the capital of the Northern Territory. She, belonging to the group of people who in Tiwi society would have to seek redress, hoped to find out more about the killing. Heather became convinced Kevin had not killed her father. Kevin's elder 'brother' Arthur was present in the building of the Magistrate's Court too. Arthur Wangiti had staked out a career in adminstration. Now he was there to help Kevin. He did not want to have the name of the family associated with such a crime. It had been unwise of Kevin, he said, to speak to the police. He personally knew of an Aboriginal man who got away with a serious assault because he only let a lawyer talk with the police. It would have been better, he said, if Kevin had contacted him, but at the time he was touring North America. Dick, the 'prisoner's friend', would be the the only Tiwi witness. Outside the courtroom a CIB detective showed the knife, an exhibit, with much aplomb to the prosecutor. Dick fixed his eyes on the knife. Back home he asked me if I had realised the blade was wrong, the deed could not have been done with that knife. Via Kevin's solicitor, Arthur talked with Kevin beforehand. Kevin told him he did not do it (*'karlu, karlu'*: an assertive no). On behalf of his younger 'brother', Arthur instructed the solicitor to plead 'not quilty'.

The (former) local senior constable appeared as the first witness of the Crown in court. He gave detailed and lengthy answers to the questions of the prosecutor. Next came a detective who had interrogated Kevin. He put forward further evidence of the police against Kevin (the detective in charge was on holidays, the forensic pathologist was ill). The solicitor did not object to the admission of the confessional record of interview, the knife, and photographs of the crime scene from a distorted angle as evidence. There was just one question in cross-examination, namely if a 'prisoner's friend' had been present when Kevin had made his first statement to the police about how he had found Tobias' dead body under the mango tree.[142] Photos taken of the corpse during the post-mortem were also shown to the public benches. I saw Heather, the daughter of the deceased, shrink away. Photographs of a dead person are taboo (*pukamani*), and very distressing when shown to Tiwi people, especially a bereaved person. The photos must have been really shocking. Later, nearly moved to tears, Heather told my wife and I:

> I keep picturing him, how we found him in Pularumpi at the Old Camp... Everytime...it comes before my eyes. At that court I was so upset. I was sitting in front and that man showed those photos. It was so upsetting...I was shaking... It upset me. I didn't know what to do [whether] to go out or burst out in tears. Later I was sitting in the car... burst out in tears day and night.

The third and last witness was Dick Pamantari. This time there was an interpreter. It seemed of little help. There were lengthy silences in response to the questions of the prosecutor. No answer as to what had happened at the police station. The magistrate suggested more leading questions be asked. 'I only sit there', Dick said. There was eye-contact between the two police officers, who had taken a seat in the public benches, and the witness when he was asked how Kevin had been treated: 'Policemen friendly?' - 'Yes.' 'No trouble?' - 'No trouble.'[143] Under cross-examination Dick said Kevin had told him he was 'going to give himself up'.[144] At the conclusion of the committal hearings the magistrate was satisfied the evidence was sufficient to commit Kevin to trial. Kevin would have to stay in jail.

In Pularumpi Kevin's solicitor happily agreed with the police theory of a 'payback'. He said this on the verandah of the police station to Simon and other Tiwi people who were there. When we were working together on a set of mortuary poles for a ceremony, Simon made fun about it with his elder brother Theodore. 'Payback, payback', he loudly mimicked the solicitor. They roared with laughter. As far as they were aware, there had only been one case of payback on the islands, just before they were born, prior to 1920.[145] Now Kevin was supposed to have acted to prevent a 'payback': It stretched the concept beyond recognition.[146] The hearings provide a good example of how communication can go awry in cases involving Aborigines. Some of the Tiwi people who visited the public benches in Pularumpi saw this ordeal as humiliating. When he failed to comprehend the English spoken by Simon, a senior and very influential man in Tiwi society, the magistrate 'talked to Simon as if he was a little boy.'

After the committal hearings in Darwin, the solicitor of the defendant said nothing could be done for Kevin anymore because of all 'the evidence in writing' against him.

Arthur Tipungwuti, in discussing the matter with the Tiwi interpreter and I, said it was 'too late'. I said the solicitor was a good man but perhaps he could have asked somewhat more questions to Kevin's defence. Arthur commented, 'He isn't worth a penny he earns.' Kevin had told his 'brother' not only that he had not done the deed but also that 'someone from the police had punched him three times'. He would have told that to Dick too. The interpreter asked why she had not been told about that, for she would certainly have brought it to Dick's mind. Arthur named a policeman he suspected to have hit Kevin, 'he is a cheeky one'. 'Kevin did tell lies' (to the police), said the interpreter, he made it worse for himself. He (being innocent) should not have said he had done it, according to her. The strange thing was, she added, that we still did not know what had been going on that night: 'No history of fight.' The next day in Pularumpi my wife and I had to tell about the hearings time after time. Phillip Wangiti, who had acted as an interpreter in the Pularumpi part, gave the following comment: 'Those

judges only want to keep on going, going. It looks like the Chamberlains' court.'[147]

7.4 The murder trial

In Darwin the North Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service (NAALAS), according to its president in the newspaper, was wrestling to clear a backlog of cases - 'the result of a huge demand on the service.' Legal associations had offered to help, and 'the prominent Melbourne barrister, Mr David Ross, QC, had also offered his services for free for four weeks' (*Northern Territory News*, 16.3.1989). On March 31, Kevin was released on bail. It had taken the barrister from Melbourne three days to get Kevin out of jail (David Ross, personal communication). Arthur Wangiti paid the necessary A$3,000 (Kevin earned A$100 a week on Melville Island); his elder classificatory brother would support him throughout the murder trial. The accused stayed in Arthur's apartment in Darwin.

The murder trial was held at the Northern Territory Supreme Court in Darwin. It lasted three weeks, from July 24 until August 5, 1989. On the Friday before the trial would start, I met David Ross in the NAALAS offices. He would take up Kevin's defence, assisted by the solicitor in charge of the Aboriginal legal aid service. The senior barrister consulted me on a number of cultural points that could be relevant to the case and he explained legal matters to me. In a criminal case like this the defence had the advantage of getting notice of the prosecution's evidence beforehand, and this had already become clear with the committal hearings, while the prosecution had no right to know about the accused's defence (cf. Chrisholm & Nettheim 1974: 64). On Sunday, the Tiwi witnesses were flown to Darwin; they were lodged together in an Aboriginal hostel. During the day the witnesses were 'proofed' by the Crown prosecution; that is, they had to tell their stories so the prosecutor knew what kinds of questions he could ask. 'Practising what to say' was how one of the Tiwi witnesses described it.

It is not possible to describe the trial in great detail here; the transcripts consist of nearly 1,000 pages. I will select only a few relevant issues and events. The court proceedings might be described as a ritual. Justice Rice, in wig and red gown, had not only judicially but also literally a high position in the back of the courtroom: Distanced, 'His Honour' overlooked the whole thing. At the bar table were the deputy permanent Crown prosecutor, Dick Wallace; the Counsel for defence, David Ross; and the solicitor, Gordon Bauman. Bauman gave the Queen's Counsel, Ross, instructions on behalf of his client. The lawyers behind the bar table were in wig and black gown; the resemblance in their appearance was at times confusing for the Aboriginal witnesses. One man asking one thing, the other man another thing or the same thing over again. Although they fought a judicial battle, Ross referred to Wallace as 'my friend', and Wallace spoke of Ross as 'my learned friend'.

The Aboriginal witnesses - also unfamiliar with court rituals such as the oath-taking, standing up, and bowing - were likely to be confused by the phrasing of questions (putting at least two alternatives in one sentence), in addition to the language problems they had to face (cf. Liberman 1981). The questions were framed by the people in wigs. This was not always understood by the Tiwi witnesses. Isaac, for instance, returned questions of his own. 'Why?' (to what purpose), he wondered, was a particular question put to him. For Simon a number of questions were so obvious that he could not see why these were asked at all. When asked what a certain police officer had said, for instance, he pointed out where this policeman sat in the public benches. He told the lawyer to go and ask the man for himself.[148] Sometimes, such miscommunications were met with laughter in court (as also had happened to Dick in the committal hearings). At the beginning of the trial Kevin entered a plea of not guilty. The judge and the jury of twelve were all non-Aboriginal persons.

The first week of the trial was spent on a so-called *voir dire*, in absence of the jury.[149] The aim of this procedure, on instigation of the Counsel for defence, was to find out whether Kevin's confession had been obtained by 'violence and trickery'. If this could be proven, then the admission to the crime could not be held as evidence against him. By subpoena the Counsel for defence received from the Chief Commissioner of Police, among other things, some fifteen statements to the police that had neither been presented to the Crown prosecutor nor to the defence. These revealed statements of conflicts between the victim and a number of other people than the accused, of earwitnesses of an alleged fight that had taken place in the Old Camp during the night of the killing, of a man who had been arguing with the victim that night, and that another knife had been found (discussed above, section 7.2). Were these pieces thrown out because they did not fit the police theory? At any rate, they were unfavourable for the Crown's case.

Ross went in hard on the detectives. Arthur Wangiti, who sat beside me in the public benches, thought the case had been won when the police started contradicting each other. Ross elicited answers that made clear that the investigation had not been conducted with great care, to say the least. The 'members of the collaboration squad', as the Counsel for defence put it, denied the allegation of violence. Asked why he had thrown out a statement of a man who had been arguing with the victim late at night, the detective in charge said, 'If I can explain, they were two elderly gentlemen who, when they had a few drinks, got cranky, and this had been going on for some time and it was - I think it's normal in Darwin, you know, you have those sorts of people, and it was nothing more than that.' The statement of the earwitness Simon, also thrown out, he dismissed as 'very unreliable', adding that the man in question was 'an elderly gentlemen'. He seemed unaware that in Aboriginal societies the senior men in particular, more than other people, are entitled to speak on delicate matters. He preferred to go on what was 'normal in Darwin'. Unreliable and inaccurate also were the notes in the day

journal of the local senior constable taken at the time (the only - and contradictory - record of the movements of the police), in contrast to a statement of a crucial interrogation of Kevin put on paper from memory more than a month after it had been conducted. A fortnight later the statement was reproduced by the other detective, who signed it as a statement of his own. The 'prisoner's friend', Dick, told the prosecutor Kevin had been forced to answer the questions of the detective. When asked how, Dick said, 'Just asked.' It did not come across. The accused, in a sworn testimony, however, specified the threat. He said he had to answer, or else they would 'keep on asking', and 'probably lock me up'. He testified that before Dick was there, he had been hit by the detective. The prosecutor got him hopelessly confused.[150] At this point Arthur was of the opinion that Kevin had blown it for himself, the case was lost.

The Crown prosecutor presented what the policemen had been telling the judge 'as a classic detective mystery of the county house variety, lacking only a butler', meaning everyone in Pularumpi was a suspect: The police had 'no clues at all', and had followed 'the classic procedure of the detective in that situation (...) with a view to discovering motive, means and opportunity.' About the trickery aspect, the false information given Kevin, the detective had said he thought he was talking about the wrong night. Justice Rice would not accept that. He said, 'He mightn't have the prescience of Sherlock Holmes, but still he's a bumbler like Dr Watson if that's what he says is the case.' After lengthy judicial argument, the judge's ruling on the preliminary matters was that in accordance with the Anunga Rules, the evidence was inadmissible up until the point of the discovery of the knife. He rejected the allegation of violence on part of the police, and ruled the record of interview to be in line with the Anunga Rules, and, therefore, admissible as evidence to be led against the accused.

After some further argument, the actual trial began.[151] The prosecutor presented the Crown's case in addressing the jury. The same Tiwi witnesses were called as during the committal hearings (see above). For them, like Aboriginal suspects under police interrogation, it was an ordeal. They frequently told my wife Jeanette and I they wanted to go home, home, as soon as possible. One man who had given up drinking beer 'hit the booze' again. At the hostel the Aboriginal witnesses tried to assess the situation with the bits and pieces of what the one or the other had been asked. The Counsel for defence, who now also had the hidden statements to go on, gave Isaac a hard time.[152] In all fairness, it must be admitted that the defence also could take advantage of the vulnerability of Aboriginal suspects and witnesses (cf. Ligertwood 1988: 203). An Aboriginal person can pretend to be ignorant as a means of obstruction, and so not have to incriminate oneself or to contradict others (Liberman 1981: 250-1). A Tiwi man, commenting on this case, said to me: 'When a guy is smart and he did it, he will find a way to get away with it.' During the overnight adjournments and at noon we went with Tiwi people to the diversions of Darwin townlife, ranging from a

bingo game of the Greek community to a striptease show in a so-called thong bar (both places where Aborigines were welcome and not excluded on the basis of a dressing code, for instance, for wearing thongs, hence a 'thong bar'). Kevin beat a white man in a snooker game, which we both interpreted as a sign luck was coming his way. For his elder 'brother' Arthur, who sat out the whole trial and whose remarks I came to regard as a kind of barometer of Tiwi views on its progress, the adversary procedure appeared to be a strange thing. He was rather radical in the views he expressed. Arther went all along with positive and negative developments, alternately predicting victory or doom. The Tiwi witnesses, outside the court, showed the same tendencies.

I will note one more issue that has to do with the standards of proof and the rules of evidence. As I said earlier, it is impossible within the scope of this chapter to discuss all the issues on which there was argument in court. Elkin writes that Aboriginal evidence - due to political, social, and economic inequities, language problems, and court procedures - is unreliable in court (1947: 183, 179-88). Sansom regards Elkin's article as 'an essay of apology' to account for the unreliability, for it is unreliability from a non-Aboriginal point of view that Elkin is talking about (1980: 208). Sansom argues that 'the Aboriginal witness transports rule-governed speech behaviour into court'. Aborigines dodging the issue, 'entering the disclaiming referral' in his jargon, mean they are not allowed to speak about it, although they might know (ibid.: 41n2, 25-6). Aborigines under police interrogation or in court, according to Sansom, leave the 'jurisdiction' of their own group and are subjected to the jurisdiction of Anglo-Australian law. As a result of this situation of isolation, which is a frightful one, they may say anything. The interesting point is that when afterwards Aboriginal persons return to their own group, social repairs will have to be made, and in an adjustment to the situation, on the basis of the persons' declarations to the outsiders and the effects of the latter acting on these, the group assessment of reality will be redefined. Hence, later statements and testimonies by the same persons tend to reflect the shifts that have occurred (1980: ch. 9). To the outsiders the different outcomes in time of this interplay, the new testimony in comparison with former statements, appears contradictory and therefore unreliable. Justice Kriewaldt, for instance, writes, 'the difficulty of being able to distinguish between truth and falsity when an aborigine is telling the story is (...) formidable, and in my opinion, insurmountable' (1960: 29-30). Strehlow would not endorse the reliability of Aboriginal evidence in court, but he points out that they undoubtly can and do make the difference between truth and untruth. Telling the truth or a lie is socially embedded: there is no reason, with regard to important matters, to tell the truth to people not entitled to know nor to lie to those who have to be told (1936: 331, 323, passim). Tiwi people surely recognise the distinction between truth and falsity, but the crucial topic is what is considered 'truth' (cf. section 7.1). The 'truth', at a certain point in time, must be socially acceptable and accepted. Consequently, I believe, when the

detective 'forced' Kevin to 'tell the truth' he got what he wanted to hear. In the altered context, apart from his fellows, the nonsense (or 'lies' in the Tiwi context) he produced was truthful in connection to the detective. Dick (who belonged to the group that 'owned' the trouble) was his 'witness'; he was forced to do so, and would have 'to help' him in making later social repairs, as well as be his agent in a forthcoming Tiwi definition of the situation: Kevin did tell lies to the police. By 'giving himself up' he had done other Tiwi people a service too, and some time in the future these people would have to even the score.[153] I mentioned that Tiwi people, in and outside the court, every time new and relevant information came to them re-assessed the situation, and this in turn led to a consensual redefinition of what was going on. Tiwi people had believed that the police would find out who had killed Tobias by taking fingerprints and using a computer. We have seen that Tiwi people from Pularumpi were reluctant to speak out. These factors suggest, among other things, that reliance on people's testimony was not considered the best way to proceed by most of the local Tiwi (the inquests failed accordingly). In the local arena, blaming one person involved others as well and thus could have important social consequences, whereas police tracking down the killer(s) through fingerprints or such a mysterious device as a computer would not face such consequences. Let me turn back to the court case.

Three witnesses of the forensic section of the police were called by the Crown: the crime scene examiner, the forensic pathologist, and a forensic biologist. Under cross-examination it turned out the crime scene examiner had forgotten to take fingerprints, had not examined the sharp stainless steel knife of the white sailor, and had not noticed that there were initials carved in the handle of the blunt knife produced by Kevin (that were not his). He claimed he had taken a swab of blood from the victim's verandah and sent it to the forensic biologist; the biologist gave evidence that she had never received it. She had, however, examined the clothes that had been fetched from Kevin after he indicated in the confessional record of interview that he had worn these on the night of the killing. No blood was found on these clothes. The forensic pathologist, who had done the post-mortem, told the open court there was definitely no wound in the victim's back (as the police tracker had told other Tiwi and Kevin had said in his admission to the crime). He estimated the time of death, as the victim was alive and mobile after the stabbing for some time (thirty to ninety minutes), as between 1 and 3 a.m. This was consistent with the time the card players, as noted in the hidden statements, had heard the noises mentioned earlier from the direction of the victim's house between 10.30 p.m. and 1.10 a.m. The pathologist - to whom the two knives taken by the police were presented - said that, without excluding the one or the other, it was more likely that the white sailor's sharp knife had caused the fatal wound than the blunt one unearthed by the accused.

Another *voir dire* took place. Ross wanted to get evidence as to whether an Aboriginal man thought the supposed lethal weapon could cause

the fatal wound. He argued against the objection of Wallace that the witness Alan Pamantari was 'unqualified'. Ross said that this man had used such knives all his life, that he was 'still engaged in the essences of a hunting-gathering society' which involved knives, and that as a health worker he had experience with knife cuts and wounds. Alan was handed the blunt knife and a close-up photograph of the fatal stab wound, taken during the post-mortem. He said, 'From my experience I would say that a knife like this wouldn't - I can see that that's a clean cut and it would be very difficult for this knife to cause that clean cut.'[154]

The Aboriginal health worker then affirmed that he had experience with steel-blade knives of European origin and of those dimensions. He further said he was an expert hunter and declared that he knew the difference in cuts, on animals as well as on humans, between a blunt knife and a sharp one. He conceded he had not compared the wounds on the humans he treated with the knives that caused them. His expertise was not acknowledged in the Anglo-Australian court. Justice Rice ruled against it and upheld the objection of the Crown prosecutor. He opted for people with stronger, Anglo-Australian, medical qualifications:

> Well the fatal point here (...) is that this witness says that in the treating of wounds, knife wounds (...): 'I have not looked at knives causing cuts I have treated.' But quite apart from that, your avenue of expertise would be in the realm of a pathologist, or we'll admit surgeons [Ross argued surgeons used scalpels, not large skin knives]; but if need be I'm sure that a surgeon would have more to say about it with the vast number of examinations that he has made. I mean, I can't get over the fact that if I were to admit this evidence of opinion, you might equally call a slaughterman [not saying what was against the evidence of a butcher].[155]

The pathologist who had taken measurements, however, was not able to give this kind of evidence about the wound.

What we have here, basically, is a difference in method: In the words of the historian Ginzburg, between the scientific, experimental method involving the repetition of phenomena and measurements in contrast to the individualising 'interpretative method based on taking marginal and irrelevant details as revealing clues' (1988: 92, 86). He points out that the qualitative approach, in which 'tiny details provide the key to a deeper reality, inaccessible by other methods', was followed by the art connoisseur Morelli, the psychoanalyst Freud, and Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes. This is not suprising, according to Ginzburg, because all three authors had medical training; they were familiar with 'medical semiotics', 'the discipline which permits diagnosis, though the disease cannot be directly observed, on the basis of superficial symptoms or signs, often irrelevant to the eye of a layman'. He traces the origin of this conjectural method back to the deciphering of animals' tracks in hunter societies (ibid.: 87, passim). Presented to the judge in the present case was an Aboriginal hunter, thoroughly familiar with the second method, who could read the signs of a knife cut in flesh. He told how he made his inferrence on the basis of a

concrete, seemingly trivial, detail - which had escaped the attention of a forensic scientist - from his experience. (Likewise, he could retrospectively decipher animals' tracks, identify individuals by their footprints, and at first sight tell the homicide victim was dead because his body did not respond to the flies crawling from the mouth.) A Sherlock Holmes-like detective could hardly have done better. Underlying the whole issue was not only a discrepancy in method but also an ethnocentric assumption as to whom was 'qualified' as an expert witness. If it was a matter of method solely, expert evidence of psychiatrists would be inadmissible as evidence in Anglo-Australian criminal courts.[156] The irony is that scientific testing proved not to be infallible in the Chamberlains' case mentioned earlier. The forensic biologist who gave evidence in Kevin's murder trial played a major role in this case, and the judge had as a barrister represented Lindy Chamberlain, the mother accused of murdering her baby near Ayers Rock (cf. Bryson 1988; Chamberlain 1990). It had been an Aboriginal man 'who had found the dingo's tracks and the impressions where the baby had been laid down that night. Those were the tracks that the Aborigines later identified as the culprit dingo's' (Camberlain 1990: 943-4).

In his summing up, towards the end of Kevin's trial, the Crown prosecutor suggested to the jury that the accused, in contrast to his representations in the confessional record of interview, had told lies in his earlier statement to the police. This was his explanation of why Kevin would have done so:

> [T]he accused was well aware when he made that statement [that 'he had been to Dick's for supper and then he went home to sleep'], that that time - the time soon after he left the club, was the time that mattered in relation to the deceased. That was when the deceased met his death. I would suggest to you that those falsehoods indicate preknowledge on the accused's part, knowledge that he needed to cover up, lies that he needed to tell.[157]

After Wallace had put the Crown's case to the jury, the Counsel for defence summed up all the opposing evidence. Ross stated, among other things, that there was no evidence for the time suggested by the Crown, but that there was evidence the victim was still alive after midnight. He also wondered how the accused could get out of a mortal wrestle on a concrete verandah and stabbing the victim, as the Crown would have it, without any bruises and without a drop of blood on him. Besides, there were other people with motive and opportunity, and another knife (means) had been found. The main issue, of course, was the reliability of the confessional record of interview with the police. The defence and the prosecution held diametrically opposed views on this. Then it was on the jury 'to decide facts in the light of the law as put to them by the judge' (Chrisholm & Nettheim 1974: 69). After a little more than two hours, the jury returned a verdict of 'not guilty' of murder, and a verdict of 'not guilty' of manslaughter. Kevin was released and could go back to the islands.

A year after he charged Kevin with the murder, the detective in charge of the homicide investigation told me at the Darwin Magistrates Court (where another Tiwi man charged with another murder had been brought for the magistrate) that the case was 'over and done with'. The solicitor in charge of the Aboriginal legal aid service said to me that Kevin had been 'extremely lucky' to be defended by the senior barrister from Melbourne; this was not the way these cases were usually run. The Counsel for defence had succeeded in casting 'reasonable doubt' on the allegation by the Crown that Kevin had killed Tobias. In the court proceedings the accused was presumed to be innocent until proven otherwise. But, as Ross put it, how could he prove he was innocent? Kevin had been in jail for five months. That was just his 'bad luck', said the solicitor. When he was put in jail he lost his relatively well-paid job with the council in Pularumpi. During the murder trial he was not entitled to social security benefits, we were told when we visted the offices in Darwin, because he was on the Community Development and Employment Program in Pularumpi (where he got no money when he did not show up to work). Ten times as many Aborigines as other Australians are caught up with the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system. It has been argued that the focus on sentencing disguises the real punishment for the accused person, as many harrowing and traumatic experiences are endured in the pre-adjudication process (see Gale *et al.* 1990: 7). This is rather sinister when one realises that in the last decade more than one hundred Aboriginal people met a sudden death in custody, many of them before they had even been to court (ibid.). The worst case is when innocent people are sentenced to imprisonment. With the judicial principle of fairness in mind, not only the reliability of Aboriginal admissions to a crime in a record of interview with the police might be put in question but also the culturally biased Anglo-Australian 'common sense' thought to be appropriate to judge on 'facts' belonging to an Aboriginal cultural setting.

I tried to make clear how partially illiterate Aborginal people can become captured in the imaginations of mainstream Anglo-Australian culture, in which the written word and the imposition of 'common sense' on these people, who do not subscribe the underlying cultural assumptions, is a basis of power over them. The ongoing impact of the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system on Aboriginal societies reflects the reproduction of political inequities. In my discussion of the present case I elaborated on the cultural miscommunications involved. The shifting Tiwi perceptions of the process of criminal prosecution were also considered. The case shows the extralocal and the local political arena inseparably intertwined. The outcome of the murder trial, the accused being 'not guilty' of the alleged crime, was one upheld by Tiwi people from the outset. The hidden statements to the police elicited by the Counsel for defence put the circumstantial evidence in another light. The detectives on the basis of *their* logic and system of concepts (e.g., what was 'normal in Darwin') selected the information as to

what fit in with their appraisal of the situation and what they considered 'true' (see Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 179). They relied so much on the one confessional record of interview, considered truthful by them but merely reflecting the unequal situation under police interrogation, that no further steps in investigating the homicide were taken. Tiwi people were of another opinion. The close relatives of the homicide victim had decided to wait to perform the final mortuary ritual until after the murder trial, as that served as another occasion to 'find out' who had killed Tobias. Again, it happened to be otherwise. Smaller postfuneral rituals had already been held in Pularumpi before Kevin went on trial. Afterward, extremely elaborate final mortuary rituals of the Bathurst Islanders and Melville Islanders simultaneously were held at Pawularitarra, the place where Tobias had been buried next to his father. The postfuneral rituals and an aftermath with the third anniversary of Tobias' death, the lifting of the name and photo taboo, will be discussed in the next chapter. These rituals in themselves were achievements, not customs to be automatically followed. Since his death, Tobias' children participated in virtually all death rituals on the islands, rallying support and creating debts. They frequently reminded people what had happened to their father. Mortuary rituals for other people were also occasions for them to express their grief concerning the loss of their father. Once we were on our way in the back of a truck from Milikapiti to Paru in order to go to a funeral in Nguiu, accross the sea strait dividing the islands. When we were passing their father's grave, located a few kilometres out in the bush, Heather and Ruth began wailing. They wiped their eyes with a piece of cloth. Theodore, Ruth's husband, touched my arm. 'Pawularitarra', he said softly, 'Pawularitarra', while pointing out in the bush. The two sisters were of a younger generation than the elder people who could express themselves in mourning songs, such as a widow, also on her way to another funeral, who sang with the voice of her deceased husband that he was waiting for her at the beach (he was buried in Nguiu) and how he longed for her. Thereafter, she wailed; the other people in the truck were moved. There is more to ritual than what is performed 'in a sequestered place' (in Turner's definition of ritual, 1973: 1100). For Tiwi people rituals are not separate events; different people bring different experiences to the rituals, and these are connected by meanings and emotions, and exchange relations, and the performances that allude to many other previous occasions, although they are recontextualised and textualised every time anew. What is said and done in these rituals is directly connected with people's lives.

8 THE POSTFUNERAL RITUALS

8.1 Introduction

The mortuary rituals for Tobias were scheduled after the murder trial. When the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system failed to solve the case, the victim's close relatives considered the final ritual (*iloti*) another chance to settle the matter. Tobias' daughter Heather declared, 'I have some ideas...two men. With the *iloti* it will come out...flog them.' The victim's elder 'brother' Bruce was somewhat more specific and said he suspected 'two men from Pularumpi'. One of these men, Oscar, had an alibi; he claimed he had gone to Bathurst Island in a dinghy with Bruce on the afternoon before the killing did take place and did not return for the next morning. Bruce denied this. I was told that during the final ritual the victim's clan 'might get wild'. A punishment by club beatings would be inflicted on the alleged killers during the night or at the conclusion of the ritual. Bruce would then confront Oscar with the alibi in order to find out if he had been one of the killers. Oscar, however, avoided the trouble in Tiwi fashion: he went away to Darwin for the weekend. Most people from Pularumpi did not want to get involved. They refrained from camping near the ceremonial grounds during the night. At the end of the two days of ritual the other alleged killer, Isaac, cleverly side-stepped the issue. He took up a spear himself, and called out for the police, claiming his money (to make ritual payments) had been stolen. No one answered the charge. Simon told me he was convinced the spirit of the victim's father had stolen the money from Isaac.

Tobias' children and his classificatory father Jack Munuluka were determined to hold a prestigeous *iloti*, involving memorable performances, much money, many mortuary poles, and the attendance of a large number of people. Such a ritual did not automatically result from factors such as the social position of the deceased and the type of death, but required hard work. People had to be mobilised, funds raised, and the ritual performances negotiated. Commitments of the performers rested on exchange relations with the organising group on various levels. Tobias' children attended virtually all mortuary rituals on the islands during the time between their father's burial and his final mortuary ritual. Frequently, they acted as ritual workers, expecting this to be reciprocated in the forthcoming ritual. During this time Tobias' spirit was considered to be harmful and bothering the living. Two men living in the Old Camp told me this spirit had tried to strangle them, and it figured at least in one amonition of another violent

death (see chapter 9). I was told that after the final mortuary ritual, Tobias' spirit no longer roamed around in the township.

8.2 The postfuneral rituals (*pukamani*) in general

The ideal type of Tiwi mortuary rituals might be divided for analytical purposes into funeral and postfuneral rituals. Much of Tiwi mortuary behaviour directly preceding or following a death is ritualised, such as wailing and the performance of mourning songs for the dying or newly deceased, the announcement of a death, the eventual wake, the disposal of clothes and personal belongings of the deceased, purification with smoke and water, and the 'opening up' of roads after fatal motor vehicle accidents. The actual burial is bracketed by two elaborate dance and song ceremonies (called *yoi*), one around the corpse in camp, and another around the new grave mound. The first is not considered a 'proper ceremony' because there is 'still a dead body around'. As mentioned earlier, the aim of the mortuary rituals is to direct the spirit of the deceased to its destination.

A number of months after the burial, a series of postfuneral rituals known as *pukamani* in the literature (Goodale 1971: 254-5) might be held. These rituals begin with the handing of an axe, fire and ochres to selected ritual workers, either in three separate small rituals or in one go. Thereafter, a series of small dances and other rituals might be organised on different days and be continued until the beginning of the final mortuary ritual, the *iloti*. The *iloti* (literally 'for good' or 'forever') is an elaborate dance and song ceremony (*yoi*) of the same type as those performed with the burial but involving all categories of personnel available (cf. chapter 5). The chosen ritual workers prepare mortuary poles that will be erected for this ritual. At the conclusion, the poles will be relocated around the grave mound (a grave with either the deceased or the deceased's clothes and personal belongings) when there is one close by.

The axe-giving is a small ritual in which an axe (*walemani*), its handle painted white, is given by representatives of the organising group to selected ritual workers. The dance movements depict the cutting of a tree. The ritual workers who received the axe may then start to chop the trees needed to make the mortuary poles. Formerly these trees were cut in the area surrounding the grave, an area that is taboo. Only the ritual workers are allowed to go there. For fear of the destructive actions of the spirit of the dead they work together. In the past, other trespassers of the tabooed area would be speared, and it is still believed serious harm or death will come to those people, with the exemption of the ritual workers, who go there. The ritual workers strip the tree trunks of their bark 'skin' and carve these in a particular shape they have in mind. Every pole has to be unique, although

there are some conventional forms of which individual ritual workers produce variations.

The presentation of fire (*ikwoni*, e.g., a box of matches or a lighter) to the ritual workers, in a dance depicting the pre-contact mode of making fire with sticks, is the sign that the carved poles can be 'smoked'. The practical purpose of this procedure is to dry out the poles above a fire so they will not crack, and to give the poles a blackened surface as a background for the painting. The expressive aspect entails a purification of the tree trunks with smoke. Nowadays Tiwi use the black contents of dry-cell batterries, mixed with PVC glue as a fixative, to give the poles a deep black surface. The mortuary poles will be mainly judged on the brightness of the painted colours, and therefore a deep black is desirable.

In the next small ritual the workers get the paints (*tilamara*), red and yellow ochres and white pipeclay, to put on the poles. In their dance movements the donors depict the painting of their faces and arms. My informants stated that the painting of the poles was similar to the most prestigeous painting of human faces and bodies, when lying down, in elaborate designs. The geometrical designs closely resembling those of the facial and body paintings are applied rythmically to the mortuary poles. A number of people have developed a distinctive style, intertwined with conventional motifs and motifs that identify the makers with other people (e.g., their 'fathers'). There is a strong emphasis on individual orginality and creativity (cf. Goodale & Koss 1967). The number, size and quality of the poles are a source of prestige both for the makers and the organisers of the postfuneral rituals.

After these rituals follow a series of rituals that focus on the dreaming of the deceased. Mountford (1958: 68) calls these 'preliminary ceremonies' and Goodale (1971: 282) 'preliminary rituals', a term adopted by later authors (Brandl 1971; Grau 1983) because these rituals precede the final mortuary ritual, the *iloti*. Strictly speaking, I believe this to be incorrect. Ideally, the rituals start in the localities of the living and go on in space and time until the beginning of the *iloti* at the burial place, an area reserved for the spirits of the dead. There is no restriction on the number of these rituals to be carried out to direct the spirit of the deceased from the world of the living to the world of the dead. When the close relatives are satisfied with the performances of these rituals, known by the general term *ilanigha*, one of the relatives calls out for the *iloti*. Then people 'break' the *ilanigha*; or else, in theory, these type of rituals would go on infinitely. One or more (depending on the number of residential groups) *ilanigha*, previously performed in the area of residence of the participants, will be carried over to the *iloti*, and re-enacted in the ceremonial grounds of the final mortuary ritual. With the *iloti* the transitory rituals come to a halt. From then on the person in question belongs to the spirits of the dead (*mopadruwi*) 'forever' (*iloti*). As I understand it, the series of small rituals are liminal rather than preliminary. Each *ilanigha* might be small compared to the *iloti* but

nevertheless its ritual goal is to chase away the spirit of the deceased from the living and to direct this spirit to its destination.

The first *ilanigha* begins with a dance in which the performers stamp their feet hard on the ground, 'really hard, punch 'em ground properly' (*amprenuwunga*). This resembles the 'awakening' of the spirit at the beginning of the 'night of sorrow' in the yam ritual. In this way the performers gain the attention of the spirit of the deceased. Stamping hard on the ground is for Tiwi a feature of a good performance. The dance performances are accompanied by song and percussion (besides the stamping of the dancers, the others clap with bare hands on their buttocks or use two wooden clubs or a stick on corrugated iron). All over the world, as Needham (1967) points out, transition and percussion go hand in hand. The Tiwi are no exception to this phenomenon. The people who attend an *ilanigha* face in the direction of the burial place of the deceased. A goose-feather ball (*tokwainga*) on a cord can be softly thrown in a little bow in the direction of the spirit's destination, 'where we go', three times, while people call out, 'hooo...ayeh'. An important element of the next *ilanigha*, 'the *ilanigha* right through' until its finish with the *iloti*, is an energetic dance called *ampikatoa* or *kutungura* in which dirt is thrown up with the feet. As I said earlier, this dance represents the tantrums of a little child loosening itself from its parents, a life-cycle event applied in the ritual context as a symbol of separation. Young men thought to be ready to undergo the initiation (that is, being an *ilanighi*) are told to perform this dance, but other people can do it as well. What we have here is a double shift: the beginning of the initiation of the spirit of the deceased into the world of the dead, and the beginning of the initiation of young men into the world of initiated adult men with ceremonial responsibilities. It might be seen as a succession of the generations in subsequent ritually marked phases; the two types of initiation coincide, restoring the social fabric after a death.

Other rituals in these series include dance ceremonies that have a dreaming of the deceased, in song and dance, as their theme. Established dreaming dances can be performed and entirely new dances created. Part of an *ilanigha* ritual can be another of the following rituals: a mock fight with the ritual workers, tree-climbing and fire-jumping by initiates or tossing the initiates or a goose-feather ball in the air instead, and a mock fight between (potential) spouses (cf. Spencer 1914: 110-11; Mountford 1958: 71-4; Goodale 1971: 284-8). When the ritual workers have been working on the poles in the area surrounding the grave, they return to camp at night. There, in a ceremonial ground, they can have a fight with the organising group. The two groups of people throw sticks, clubs, and spears at each other which have to be dodged; thereafter, they wrestle.[158] The ritual workers are considered polluted by having been in touch with the spirits of the dead. The mock fight can be staged to 'chase *pukamani* [taboos as well as the spirits] away'. The performance of this ritual has become rare because most workers tend to make the poles in the townships and transport these by truck to the place where the final ritual will be held. There is considerable

variation in the performances of the second ritual that may be distinguished as two separate rituals. A fire is lit at the base of a bloodwood tree, and either initiates climb the tree or people hold the tree and shout ritual calls. Next, the participants jump over the fire. The tossing of novices in the air can be replaced by tossing a goose-feather ball. The third ritual, the mock fight between actual and potential spouses (*paumati*), usually takes place shortly before the *iloti* commences. These people hit each other with green boughs, a procedure accompanied with much laughter because there is license to touch people in (potential) lover relationships. The *paputawi* are hit to the legs, the *mutuni* to their cheeks, places marking their relationship with the deceased (see table 5.1 and 5.2, chapter 5). Other people can be hit everywhere, 'because we in *ilanigha* we *pukamani* so we gotta kill each other with leaves', as Nancy explained to me; the spirit of the deceased was still there, and when he or she was a potential spouse the dead person used the same kinship term and had the same feelings corresponding with that relationship as those people who attack with green boughs have to those being attacked. In other words, the smacking with leaves by (potential) spouses releases from taboo the ordinary kinship term for a potential spouse, which was equally applied by the deceased to the persons attacked; 'that *pukamani* will go away after that'.

Before the *iloti* four categories of bereaved people have to go around a fire and burn the hair from their legs. Each category of these bereaved sings about a conventional subject matter (see again the tables in chapter 5 for the mortuary kinship terms): the *unantawi pularti* sing a song about a boat, the *mamurapi turah* a song about the cause of death (e.g., sickness), the *kerimerika (turah)* a song about 'devil' or spirits, and the *ambaruwi* a song about possible amorous suitors of the deceased. This 'smoking', accompanied by a dance, is regarded as a protective measure. In October 1989, a group of people arrived too late at a ritual of two days for a deceased woman. The widower was so angry that he told them to go straight for *iloti* and that they were not allowed to 'go in fire'. These people, frightened lest harm befall them, nevertheless went somewhat further into the bush and carried out the 'smoking' ritual. My informants stated that in addition to purification of death-related pollution, people might 'go in fire' to warm themselves (for the ceremony) and to 'throw away all the bad luck, [for instance], no number in the cards, got throw away all those in the smoke.' On the one hand, being in touch with the spirits of the dead is considered dangerous and life-threatening. On the other hand, it is considered to promote people's well-being, health, and luck. These ambiguous collective representations reflect the ambiguous emotions towards the deceased (cf. Freud 1983: chapter 2).

Preceding the *iloti* people can paint their bodies or have them painted, and adorn themselves with ceremonial ornaments (various bangles, head-dresses of cockatoo feathers or woven pandanus leaves, and on a cord around the neck, goose-feather balls). Not all people attending the rituals do this, but ornamentation expresses people's engagement, a sort of index of

being 'really *pukamani* [bereaved]'. Of course, there are people who are purists and others who are less dogmatic. But there is also a tendency for those who have been in close contact with the deceased, those very closly related to the deceased, and those in ritual leadership roles to apply facial and body paintings and wear some ornaments. Mountford (1958: 92) regards the body paint as a disguise for the spirit of the dead. It is a 'mask of the body' (Morphy 1991), but its application depends on particularities, the emotions and personality of the people concerned, and context (healing properties are also attributed to the paints).

When coming to the ceremonial grounds where the *iloti* will be held, the ritual workers go first. With clubs and sticks the workers hit the earth in the ceremonial ring (*milimika*) and the mortuary poles, erected in a line. They shout 'hoi hoi hoi' (like people do in the *paumati*), driving away the spirits of the dead. Then the other bereaved rush forward and wail collectively, holding the poles (some people hit their bodies against the poles, especially those parts of the body denoting their relationship to the deceased). Next, a fire is lit in the ceremonial ground and circled by the participants. A previous *ilanigha* ritual, or such a ritual accompanied by a song from the last yam ritual, will be performed. After the call for *iloti* this series of rituals is ended, and people proceed with the dance and song ceremony (*yoi*) that forms the main part of the *iloti*. This time, in contrast to the burial rituals, a full-scale ritual involving all categories of bereaved will be staged. For a description of the full sequence of personnel, dances, and songs, I refer to the tables in chapter 5. In the burial rituals the matrilineal relatives of the deceased are considered 'too close' but after the lapse of time they do perform in the final ritual.

As in other rituals, mourning songs can be performed apart from the centre stage. There is a difference in nuances and wording of these songs at the time of the final ritual in contrast to these type of songs at burial and yam rituals. When 'crying for a dead body' people use 'straight words', but with the final ritual the song language employed is even more metaphorical and interspersed with words that do not have a literal meaning but have strong emotional connotations and are, therefore, 'hard words' (so emotionally charged that people find it hard to pronounce them). For instance, when a widow after some months arrives for again at her husband's grave, in connection with the final ritual, she performs a special type of widow song in that different way (*umurukut*).

They have 'payday', as Tiwi say, with money collected on a blanket (from the *unantawi, mamurapi turah, mutuni*, and sometimes *paputawi* as well) and laid out to be distributed by the actual spouse of the deceased, the bereaved children or parents to the ritual workers. Care is taken to show exactly the amount of money that is given by a particular person to whom. Disagreements are likely to arise at this stage about debts or the quality and size of the mortuary poles. The monetary payments, sometimes also fabrics, are carried around in a dance and handed to the ritual workers. When the ritual workers are satisfied with their payment, they lift their poles from the

ceremonial ring and in a small ritual relocate these in a formation around the grave; if there is none the poles are left in a line where they were put before the beginning of the final ritual.

The actual widow or widower is ritually washed, and therewith relased from the mourning taboos, by a sibling of the deceased. The survivors rush to the grave, wail and hit themselves, drop on the grave mound, and cry collectively for the last time. They say farewell to the spirit of the deceased and leave. Their ornaments might be left behind on the grave mound.

Exchange relations in the rituals

Unless obliged by a very close relationship to the deceased, Tiwi perceive of their sorrow, ritual performances and services as gifts. These 'gifts', including dances and songs, are not for free. Such gifts and the ritual payments, once made, always have to be reciprocated in a balanced manner on future occasions. The web of mutual ritual obligations pulling people in after a death is an important phenomenon on which the whole 'ceremony business' thrives.

Following a death the close patrilineal relatives face the hardship, perhaps helping them in coping with their grief, of finding sufficient money and support to fulfill their obligations to the deceased and at the same time to the people to whom they have outstanding debts. Other people, of course, have also contracted debts to them or are close kin unable to refuse, and preferably these people will be mobilised to give their support or will be commissioned as ritual workers. With regard to the burial the need for help from ritual workers is acute, as the responsible bereaved are incapacitated by mourning taboos (see Hart & Pilling 1960: 89-95), but the number of ritual workers and the amount of money to be paid them might be limited. The time between the burial and the final ritual is used to raise and save funds, ensuring people's attendance by attracting debts themselves, creating new debts in other people, and rallying kin and, when neccessary, ritual leadership support. Tiwi reckon the time to a forthcoming ritual in the number of 'payweeks' (the weeks with a fortnightly payday following on 'nothing' or *moyla* weeks). Recently bereaved relatives of different deceased frequently support each other in their sorrow and (if permitted by their respective kin relationships) in mutually fulfilling ritual tasks and obligations. In closely following the practices of several skilled Tiwi politicians I learned how they developed master schemes in manipulating with identities, credits and debits (e.g., arranging a short-cut deal such as allowing an old mortuary pole to be used and therewith diminishing the debt that will be created, selectively attending mortuary rituals, following their own interests in making identity claims or suppressing identity, masking a lack of money by pumping it around a few times on a single occasion, pressing people in crying poor and so 'taking' the winnings in card games).

A person's ritual exchange networks can be expanded or relatively limited. The 'bookkeeping mentality' described by Hart (Hart & Pilling 1960: 92) in the 1920s prevails (and not only between mourners and

'nonmourners' as he suggests). I found that people were often careful to make sure that their contributions were returned, restricting their outgoing payments to people in their own township on whom they easily could exert pressure to repay them as soon as the occasion arose. The same accounts for helping out bereaved relatives in making their ceremonial payments. To have prestigeous and memorable rituals, skilled performers are desired. Only a very small percentage of the male population is able to compose the ritual songs. These persons tend to be involved more in the ritual exchange networks than others. These people, when not directly obliged themselves, have their price and often sell, so to speak, their ceremonial leadership and performative skills dearly. People commissioned as ritual workers will be directly paid, but the closely related bereaved will also become indebted to more distantly related people who have to be asked to enact ritual roles, the bosses in particular. In an extreme case a female relative of the deceased might even be given as a wife to the boss of the mortuary rituals.

Kinship relations are not always clear-cut because people can be related to each other in more than one way (cf. chapter 2). These circumstances give ample room for political manoeuvring. An emphasis on the relationship and shared identities with the deceased is expected. The point I am driving at, however, is that in Tiwi rituals skilled performers often have more or less hidden agendas. Clever politicians, with sufficient knowledge and ability, may rhetorically enforce 'identity claims' (Burke 1974) that seem to be far-fetched at first sight. In other words, they may exploit choice in a kaleidoscope of multiple identities in order to promote their own interests and those of their allies. The intellectually challenging tracing of relationships in ritual takes place in, among other things, metaphorical song language, the selection of dance movements, ritual calls, and wailing. Bloch states that in much of political anthropology there is a shared presupposition that politics is the conscious exercise of power. In this view it is inevitable that authority will be questioned, and, therefore, power that is not normally challenged is not the focus of attention (1973: 3). The rhetoric in ritual is mostly taken for granted and remains unchallenged in a direct way. According to Kertzer this is precisely what explains the success of ritual: it 'creates an emotional state that makes the message uncontestable because it is framed in such a way as to be seen inherent in the way things are. It presents a picture of the world that is so emotionally compelling that it is beyond debate' (1988: 101). In the mourning songs the voice of the deceased is frequently used as a rhetorical device legitimating the performer's point of view. Influential Tiwi people can, as they say, 'make a law' not to be broken by others. Such a person even stated, 'I am the Law'.

In mortuary ritual a Tiwi person may in dance stress more than one mortuary kinship relation to the deceased, perform with different categories of personnel, and thus enact a double role. Likewise, a performer may make a choice between different relationships to the deceased, acting out only one role (and even then a person who, for instance, is classified to enact a ritual worker role may be paid informally, 'outside' the ritual). More often than

not the actual performances have a political rationale, depending on particularities, such as the state of interpersonal and intergroup relationships at the time. Brandl (1971) argues that for the Tiwi, kinship is the basis of all 'traditional' social relations. I find it difficult to see how it may be otherwise because all Tiwi are actual or classificatory kin. What really matters, however, is what optional kinship relationships within this framework are actualised. The mortuary rituals encompass an arena in which people have to make these choices on every occasion (cf. Grau 1983: 327-32).

The ritual exchange relations between the ritual workers and their employers are linked with the exchange of marriage partners between exogamous matriclans (*keramili*). As Hart puts it, the close relatives of the deceased become incapacitated by mourning taboos; they are not allowed to dispose of the corpse and to carry out a number of ritual tasks, and therefore have to rely on other people not as closely related to the deceased, to whom they then become indebted. He writes that 'such debts were carried on the same mental ledgers as other debts, such as marriage debts' (Hart & Pilling 1960: 91-2). Both modes of exchange follow the same lines and are even more closely linked. It is a conventional feature of the performative role of the ritual workers to stress existing marriage debts, one way or the other. Sometimes people refuse to perform as ritual workers when there has been no marriage deal effectuated between the respective groups or when the score is even. Mortuary rituals and marriage politics are both avenues through which individual Tiwi people can obtain influence and prestige (see Hart & Pilling 1960). In final mortuary rituals for Tobias this can be demonstrated for the 'boss', Jack Munuluka (a distant classificatory father of Tobias), and one of the principal ritual workers, Jerome Pamantari (Tobias' brother-in-law). Tobias was indebted to Jerome, according to the latter, but Tobias' daughters would become indebted to him even more.

8.3 The postfuneral rituals for the victim, 1989

In this section I will describe in detail the postfuneral rituals for Tobias (June-August 1989). It is important to note that Tobias' classificatory father, Roger Imalu, in Pularumpi, who was supposed to be the boss of the mortuary rituals of the Melville Islanders and who was expected to organise the *ilanigha* rituals, did not enact this role.

Jerome, who had been 'put forward' by Tobias' children as the principal ritual worker, pressed people to go ahead with the rituals although Simon considered the time 'too early'. On the basis of his position of seniority in his partilineage and his experience Simon would have to be consulted by Jerome concerning ritual affairs. He had nominated his classificatory son Jerome (EBS) as his successor, the person who would take over the ritual responsibilities after his death.

Jack Munuluka, another classificatory father of Tobias from Bathurst Island became the actual boss of the joint final mortuary rituals for Tobias

of the people from both islands. Jack had decided to turn the mortuary rituals into 'money business'. His involvement in the mortuary rituals for Tobias represents a good example of how a person related relatively distantly to the deceased can use mortuary rituals to obtain influence and prestige.

Shortly before the final ritual it came out why Roger had been so reluctant to organise the mortuary rituals. A faction in Pularumpi, dominated by Isaac, intended to hold mortuary rituals in Pularumpi apart from those at Pawularitarra, where Tobias was buried. A reason for this was that people at Pularumpi expected some form of vengeance for Tobias' death, as was explicitly stated by the closely breaved, would take place at Pawularitarra (therefore, they did not camp there during the night). There happened to be insufficient support for separate rituals, however, because a number of people on whom Isaac normally could exert influence had already committed themselves to the grand-scale ritual near Tobias' grave. Jerome, for instance, had made a huge mortuary pole. For him these rituals were an opportunity too to obtain more influence and prestige.

Postfuneral rituals in Pularumpi and Nguiu

At the end of June, Heather telephoned the Pularumpi council office, saying that people had to prepare to start the postfuneral rituals. The message had to do with 'money business'; it meant there would be enough funds to make the necessary payments. Roger was still presumed to be the boss in the mortuary rituals of the Melville Islanders for Tobias. Jack would be the boss in a separate series of rituals for the people of Bathurst Island. During the bush holiday that was on, Jack camped in his country in the northwest of Bathurst Island. On a Thursday morning, the sixth of July, he came to Pularumpi to do his shopping and to hear when the ceremonies would take place. Jerome told him these would start on the Saturday next. Jerome had made a phone call to his niece Heather (MDD) urging the Milikapiti group to come because the people in Pularumpi were ready for the axe-giving.

On Friday evening at the beer canteen Isaac performed an old song. Jerome responded with another song. He said to Isaac and other patrons that they were the only two who knew about *palingari* (the past or 'tradition') and that they were the only ones who kept it going. Jerome said that in the final mortuary ritual he would drop his loincloth like a proper widower used to do in the old days. In the card games Heather had lost some A$110s while Jerome had taken the winnings. It is very likely Heather deliberately lost the money as an informal down payment to the principal ritual worker. Jerome was getting drunk. He did not seem to take notice of Simon, who was present at the canteen for a short period of time.

The next morning, Tobias' daughter Laura visited us. She was very nervous. Simon had growled at her because nobody had told him about the axe-giving. She had told Simon not to be angry with her because Jerome was the 'boss' and he had ordered her and her sisters to come. Heather and Laura were already there; the rest would come later. Laura thought it

wrong that Simon had not been informed. He had taken care of her father, 'always fed him with beer and money'. According to Simon, it was too early to have the axe-giving; it should have been scheduled after the bush holiday.

At noon, people were playing cards in the Old Camp. There was no sign of a ceremony. As the smaller rituals usually took place around this time in Pularumpi, some people believed there would be no axe-giving. Simon had gone out hunting. Jerome stated the ceremony would be later that afternoon. If Jack would not turn up, he said, Theodore (a matrilineal relative, *marauni pularti*) would replace him.

Gradually about thirty people gathered around the ceremonial ring (*milimika*) where the *kulama* had been performed. There had been an *iloti* not long before, and a sapling painted with white pipeclay was still standing in the middle of the ring. The rituals preceding the *iloti* were meant to guide the spirit of the dead to his destination: his dreaming place and his father's grave. To this ritual aim, the spot was properly situated. As mentioned before, facing a certain direction denoted a relationship with person or place. From one side of the ring one faced Tobias' little house and the place where his dead body had been found and where his spirit was still presumed to dwell; and far behind, in the central north of the island, was the location of Tobias' dreaming place (Wulintu or Nodlaw Island). The men grouped at this side of the ring. From the other side of the ring one faced Pawularitarra, in the southwest of the island, where both Tobias and his father had been buried. The women situated themselves at that side of the ring.

Six women, Tobias' actual and classificatory daughters, painted their bodies with white clay. Two daughters also painted white two axes and put them in the middle of the ceremonial ring. As Mike had gone out hunting in the bush, looking for possums in hollow logs with a mirror, only two classificatory sons (including myself) were present. Besides Jerome, twelve male and female ritual workers (Tobias' lover Jasmine among them) had come to the ceremony. At first the waiting was for Simon, but when it became clear he would not come back before the next day, the rituals began.

On this occasion, three smaller rituals - the presentation of the axe, fire, and ochres to the ritual workers - were lumped together. These were ostensibly headed by Tobias' deceased father Minapini, who represented his *dreaming* (*irumwa*, the father's *imunga*). Nancy, a ritual worker and 'widow' (*ambaru*), was seated beside the ceremonial ring. She turned her body towards the spot where Tobias' corpse had lain and towards his *dreaming place*. Like Minapini she belonged to the Mosquito clan (*wulintuwila*) so the latter spot was also the seat of her clan (*imunga*). She, using Minapini's instead of Tobias' voice, sang: 'Why is everybody talking about me?' Then she stood up and facing the township walked back and forth in *ambaru*-fashion, singing: 'I am the man, you fellows are just rubbish (shit-people)!/Why are you talking about me, you cowards?/I am a real murderman (*kwampini*)./I am the one who killed all those people at Matalau.' These were words of a clever politician and 'big-headed' (able)

woman. In this juggling of identities Nancy was singing on behalf of Tobias' children. People in Pularumpi, including Nancy, had been talking about Minapini and his son (conceptually one). They pretended to be tough but in fact they were cowards. Minapini stressed how he dealt with such people: he killed four of Nancy's 'fathers' (FBs). What we have here is a) an admission of guilt, b) a threat of retaliation, and c) a display of solidarity with the bereaved children. She explained to me that she composed the song because the people present were talking; in this way she demanded silence and respect because the rituals were about to begin. Her employing the stance of Tobias' father was another means of distancing Tobias' spirit, appropriate in this ritual context of driving the spirit of the dead away towards his destination.

Before Nancy was finished, Theodore began performing his first song. The words were picked up by Isaac and Jerome, who were beating time with sticks on corrugated iron. Theodore told me he was singing for the bereaved children (*mamurapi*). He also took the stance of their grandfather Minapini: 'Get the axe and sharpen it./You cut the trees down.' The song text had a literal meaning: an axe was given to the ritual workers, and they were commissioned to make the mortuary poles and therefore had to fell some trees. The connotation of the song, in that the ritual workers had to use a sharp axe (sometimes an axe with a good handle), was that they had to do a proper job and hence would earn a lot of money. The 'daughters' danced with high-heeled steps, characteristic of female dancing, inside the ceremonial ring in semicircular formation, facing in the direction of their father's grave. They made cutting movements with their arms as if they were using axes to fell trees. The formation of the dancers encompassed a highly stylised reference to jumping mullets, another of Tobias' dreamings. As we have seen, these mullets jumping out of the water indicated Minapini and his companion were about to kill people at Matalau. In concerted action Nancy repeated her song outside the ceremonial ring. After these women the 'sons' danced, also moving inward towards the centre but facing the mango tree under which Tobias' corpse had been found. The 'daughters' then danced for a second time. Heather picked up the axe. Her stepsister Ruth grabbed it and hit herself over the head with the blunt side of the blade. Heather stopped her and presented the axe to a female ritual worker from Milikapiti. This woman, Murielle, had done the same as Ruth when she was giving an axe to her (the axe-giving and the *iloti* had been held recently in this same ceremonial ring).[159] Ruth and this woman now had come 'level'. Somewhat later, outside the ceremonial ground Ruth sat down with the blade of the axe on her head facing the mango tree. She wailed, 'giving sorry' (*nurupmiori*) for her stepfather and the money involved. Tobias' classificatory son Jim in our second dance presented the other axe to a male ritual worker, Jasmine's adoptive brother.

Theodore proceeded with the next ritual, the giving of fire (*ikwoni*) to the ritual workers. He composed the following song: 'My name is Tupulu'auwungtura [another name of Minapini]./Take the matches and light

all the grass!' Once again the symbolism of this song is intricate (the symbolic complex of bodily hair, hairy roots, and tall grass has been discussed above). The ritual workers dried the cut and skinned tree trunks above a fire and at the same time gave these a dark brown surface (resulting from the soot) as a background for the paintings. They cleared the area around the grave and prepared the dancing grounds. Focusing on burning tall grass, Theodore indicated that the ritual workers had to do more than simply make poles; they would have to erect shades above the dancing ground to protect the performers from the heat of the sun. The dancers of both sexes performed twice. Their hand movements represented the use of sticks to produce fire. Tobias' daughter Judy gave matches to the female ritual worker from Milikapiti. Jim gave matches to a male ritual worker from Pularumpi.

For the third ritual the dancers had white clay, for their dances represented the painting of arms and faces. Theodore sang: 'Take the ochres so you got to paint up my face.' The painting of the poles was closely associated with decorating the human body with similar spectacular designs. Facial paintings were usually the most delicate, so the ritual workers had to take care that the designs painted on their poles were really striking. It was made clear that they would be paid accordingly. Tobias' classificatory daughter Maud gave a piece of white clay, after Ruth had rubbed her face with it, to the female ritual worker from Milikapiti. Jim presented it to another male ritual worker from Pularumpi.

When the rituals were over, the gathering of people dispersed. Jerome stated that thirteen poles would have to be made. Nancy thereupon told me I was to give nothing to her cousin from Milikapiti, who had received the axe. 'Only [give to] us,' the ritual workers from Pularumpi, she said. At sundown, Nancy sang for Tobias' children in the beer canteen: 'Just carefully, look after your father well because he is really drunk.'

A series of rituals called *ilanigha* would follow the rituals described above. I was told '*ilanigha* is coming up'. The first in this series (all focusing on a single theme, 'go by dreaming; father's dreaming'), was planned for the following Monday. Thereafter these rituals would continue until the *iloti* at the burial place. Roger, Tobias' classificatory father, was supposed to take the lead in these ceremonies. The axe-giving, pushed by Jerome and Heather, had been performed without him. Roger had gone off to the Safari Camp, where he worked on an irregular basis as a guide. There seemed to be a lack of commitment on his part. He once told me when Tobias was still alive that Tobias was 'nothing'; he did not appear to have liked the dead man very much.

Tobias' other classificatory father, Jack, informed me of his plans to have an axe-giving at Nguiu. He had his fortnightly payday 'in the week coming up' and then following on the second payday he would commision the ritual workers for the postfuneral rituals. 'I want to make money business of this', he explained to me, 'with my pension.'

Tobias' daughter Laura said that after this axe-giving they would have a meeting to 'ask the people' who had killed her father. Jack had no intention, as all the preceding inquests had bitterly failed, to call for such a meeting at that stage. Although most people were confident Kevin had not killed Tobias, it was still possible things hitherto unknown would be revealed in the court case. Equally important, several significant participants in the mortuary rituals had been summoned to go to Darwin to act as witnesses in court.

On the 31st of July, Jack had his axe-giving and the two rituals connected with it performed all 'in one go' in a ceremonial ground close to his house at the border of Nguiu (that is, in the direction of Tobias' and his father's country of origin). He had already made some payments to the four male ritual workers and pole-makers he had commissioned. These men worked and camped near Tobias' grave at the other side of the Apsley Strait. To this purpose Jack had lent them his dinghy with outboard motor.

In Pularumpi, five male ritual workers were carving and painting mortuary poles to be erected at Tobias' grave. Jerome had made an exceptionally large pole. Alan Puruntatameri, another one of the ritual workers, commented that Roger ought to hold the *ilanigha*. Actually, he said, Roger should have done it in the week following on the axe-giving, 'but court... long time'. Jerome grumbled. He had told Roger several times that he was *unantani* and that he had to do it. He was the only one who could do it, Jerome said. Simon could do it eventually but he had 'other worry, other business' because his wife had died. Jerome said that therefore Roger was the only one who could do it. 'I worry', he said, that the people from Pularumpi could go to Pawularitarra without *ilanigha*; 'I'm worrying about it, we sleep there at night!' Jerome thought it dangerous to stay at the burial place unless proper rituals had been performed.

Jack had decided to have his first *ilanigha* at Nguiu on Monday, the 14th of August.[160] On Bathurst Island these rituals were not at noon, as in Pularumpi, but at three o'clock in the afternoon; when work had been finished and the local people came to the Social Club. Under the mango trees opposite the club Jack would lead these rituals on four succeeding days, and then the Bathurst Islanders would 'finish 'em off' near Tobias' grave (on Melville Island) on Saturday morning. The theme of the rituals was Tobias' father's *dreaming*, the red woollybutt blossom (*mantiuloni*) because Minapini had 'come out' of the Woollybutt tree clan (*temeraringuwi*). The performers marked this dreaming by placing both their hands on top of their heads. As also the song lines were 'all same through' (see section 8.3).

In the week preceding the rituals at Pawularitarra neither in Pularumpi nor in Milikapiti were *ilanighuwi* held. On Tuesday, Jerome went to Milikapiti. He wanted to check with Heather because he did not want to go to the burial place 'for nothing'. Theodore was not there. He had gone to Tiwi relatives on the mainland for a funeral. The mortuary poles, however, had

been made. That night Nancy and Jerome went 'wild' with Roger, who then said he would have the *ilanigha* the next day. The following evening the two men met again. Roger immediately performed a song text for an *ilanigha*. 'Alright uncle (*ilimani*, MFBS)', Jerome said, 'you are in business.' The ritual was scheduled the next day at noon in the Old Camp. Obviously, there would be no ritual then. Roger was too polite to make an outright refusal. The following day namely happened to be a payday: People at Pularumpi were too busy playing cards to bother about a ceremony. Jerome knew this. Early in the morning he had gone to Putjamirra Safari Camp to work there as a guide for the day (using this stratagem he acquired some extra money and it prevented him, given his prospective ritual 'payday', to have to 'lose' his pension money in the card games or to have to give it away to 'relations').

The heavy drinking, as usual on paydays, liberated people's tongues. It became clear why Roger had been dawdling over performing the rituals. On instigation of Isaac, a faction of the community wanted to organise a separate *iloti* for Tobias at Pularumpi. Barry told me Isaac had proposed it because 'us-mob' did not want to pay 'far away', to people from the other townships. Their fear of not receiving the money back, however, masked another fear. A number of people and their 'relations' in Pularumpi were afraid, and not without reason, that the *iloti* at Tobias' grave would result in an outburst of violence. As mentioned before, some men from Pularumpi had alledgedly killed Tobias. Isaac's stepson told me the 'Law' required the persons to be mentioned as the killers had to be dealt with 'straight away' after the ceremony 'or at night'.

Jerome was furious about the idea of a Pularumpi faction not participating in the mortuary rituals at Pawularitarra. He had been commissioned, he argued, so this 'business' could not be stopped anymore. On Bathurst Island Jack had given his orders. 'That's on', Jerome said, no one could stop it. If the dissident group at Pularumpi persevered with something else, he continued, 'we cut them off'. Jerome backed up his threat in saying he was still a 'traditional owner' (a delegate to the Tiwi Land Council). It was in Jerome's interest, being the principal ritual worker, that these people would take part in the mortuary rituals.

On that Friday, I accompanied the male ritual workers from Pularumpi to Pawularitarra, where they brought the mortuary poles. Two shades had been erected above the ceremonial grounds near the grave, one for the Bathurst Islanders and one for the Melville Islanders. The male ritual workers from Milikapiti had done most of the clearing. They had also brought soft white sand for the dancing grounds and to restore the grave mound. They informed the other Melville Island ritual workers, from Pularumpi, that the mortuary poles of the Bathurst Islanders were small compared to the other ones. Jerome commented that people ought not to pay these ritual workers, only those ones who had made a large pole. One of the

ritual workers asked another, Alan Pamantari, if he would stay at Pawularitarra for the night. 'No', Alan replied, 'too frightened.'

Ever more people at Pularumpi decided they would go on Sunday, not Saturday. Reuben, Jerome's son, thought it too dangerous to cross the sea strait between Nguiu and Paru when he or other people were drunk; accidents had already occurred all too often. Roger, like Isaac, also said he would go on Sunday.

Simon stated that with regard to the postfuneral rituals for Tobias, there would be a 'small one on Saturday and big *iloti* on Sunday'; Saturday night 'songs of sorrow' would be performed. On Saturday morning, Simon first would have a cleansing ritual of his deceased wife's house, and thereafter, about 11.00 a.m., we would go 'straight away' to Pawularitarra. Jerome lingered until he had been able to do his drinking at the beer canteen and to take away a dozen cans of beer in the late afternoon. About 5 p.m. we left for Pawularitarra.

The postfuneral rituals at Pawularitarra (1)

The people from Bathurst Island had performed an *ilanigha* ritual at 3 p.m. Thereafter the final rituals had been initiated by a ritual cleansing with smoke of the major participants. Most of the people had gone away to drink beer at the canteens in Milikapiti and Nguiu.

Jack was just raking away the remains of a smoking fire when we arrived. He had his face painted with red and yellow ochres. Both Jack and Jerome wore no clothing except a loincloth. Jack and his wife camped on the edge of the bush to the Bathurst Island side. Jack's sister Mavis, from Pularumpi, and her husband had their campfire at some distance at the same side of the graves. There were also a number of women, including the classificatory widows of Tobias who had also participated in the yam ritual at Myilly Point. Jerome chose a spot to make his campfire opposite Jack at the other side of the graves. In between, facing both ceremonial grounds and the graves, Tobias' 'brother' Steven Tampajani with his wife Agatha and son Harold had their campfires burning. Tobias' children would also camp at this location. Carol was the only one present at that time.

Jerome called out to her, 'All my nieces should be here!'. When it had become dark he rose from his campfire and sang words of the dead man arguing with him: 'Where are your kids (*moruwi*, 'children', M or MB speaking)?' As usual Jerome repeated the song several times. In between he called out, 'He (dead man) is worrying for his kids!' Somewhat later, Tobias' children Heather, Judy, and Ralph, among others, returned from Milikapiti. Steven's son Max, who was too drunk to stand on his feet, had come with them. He would be the cause of some trouble during the night.

Jack left his campfire, walked into the open space, and directed himself towards Tobias' grave: (Dead man saying) 'My father is sleeping with me./He (Minapini) is close to me./Maybe tonight I gotta sleep well!'

Jack repeated this mourning song and concluded it in bewailing his 'son' Tobias. For Tiwi being with one's relatives implies a feeling that perhaps can be best translated as happiness (*kukunari*). At her campfire Mavis, a classificatory mother of Tobias, wailed loudly. She directed herself towards his grave: (Dead man is shaking her arm, saying:) 'Hello auntie, long time to see you.' She indicated she was not a mother-in-law (a potential relationship) to the deceased: The dead man shook her hand.

Jerome sat at his campfire and sang: (Dead man saying) 'I thought that is my brother-in-law, and he is jealous of me in the night./Maybe your kids (*moruwi*), they might be ashamed of me swearing at you.' Jerome expressed in his song that he was sexually jealous (*tulura*) of Tobias, who had married Jerome's sister while giving no wife in return. Jerome suggested Tobias' children were ashamed of their father because he was swearing at their uncle (*ilimani*, M'B', calling them 'children' as well).

Jerome further complained he was the only ritual worker present (he forgot about the elderly female ritual workers who camped in the bush at the other side of the graves). 'They all should be here', Jerome said. He composed a new song: (Dead man saying:) 'Why (are) you sleeping far away from me?/We should sleep together!' Jerome let Tobias speak to the people in his widow or widower category (*ambaruwi*), who ought to have been near Tobias' grave.

Jack, the boss of the postfuneral rituals, now approached and faced the grave. He performed two song verses in which the deceased asked about the axe. In this type of song, called *timatreiakuwalla*, the dead man asked his 'father' Jack about the quality of the axe (*walemani*) he had given the ritual workers. The better the axe in these songs, the more money would change hands in the ceremony, and the more prestigeous the rituals would be. Jack sang: (Dead man saying:) 'I hope you gave an axe with a good handle./I hope you cleaned the axe and sharpened it with a file.' The quality of the axe given correlated with the number of ritual workers (and poles) contracted. Jack made clear he had a large amount of money to offer in mentioning a sharp axe with a new handle (*wulani*) instead of the dead man asking for a blunt axe (*tumutumunga*). He concluded his last song: (Dead man calling out:) 'Daddy come up, and sit close with me!'.

Tobias' daughter Judy roasted and distributed wallaby and wild pig meat. The full moon lit the coloured fabrics that surrounded Tobias' grave. Francis kept bothering the other people in this camp with his drunken talk. His younger brother Harold and Heather told him to 'shut up'. Max ignored their repeated requests. Harold told him to stop or he would be killed. Tobias' son Ralph awoke. He burst out crying and uttered threats of revenge for his father's death: 'Tomorrow I bust 'em up'. Thereafter, Max continued, saying he was the president of Picketaramoor (the forestry station with six inhabitants). Jerome got angry. He stood up and went to the noisy camp: 'I don't care for that, I don't care. You should have respect!

What are you here for? You mob can better go!... Go!' Nevertheless, Max went on with his boozy talk. Then Tobias' daughter Judy took a piece of burning wood from her campfire. She walked towards Max and threw the firewood at him. She missed, fell to earth, and cried. Harold now wanted to attack his brother. Max did not stop. He said to Harold and Judy , while lifting a can of beer: 'Oh, you want beer? Here, you have beer!' (Harold just had returned from the mainland where he participated in a sobriety programme, after his wife - fed up with his drinking - had commited suicide a few months earlier.) Judy fell headlong to her blanket. She cried 'Fucking beer!' -- it was always beer they wanted, always beer, but she did not want beer. From his campfire Jerome called out to Max: 'You got no respect!' He warned him that they were there for 'a serious business'. Jerome moved in the direction of Tobias' grave and sang: (Dead man saying:) 'Did these people come for me?/They are talking away./Why you live with me?/Why are you living with me tonight?/You should go away!'

When a fight started between the two brothers, their father Steven took his blanket and walked away from the camp. The sick old man was followed by his wife. After a while they came back. Max' attitude had changed completely. Now he fell sprawling into the campfire. His mother tore him out of the fire. Max crashed into the fire again. His mother took him out, and so it went on for one and a half hours. Finally, Harold helped his mother carry his brother away from the campfire. They left him there.

Now and then Jerome left his campfire. When he sang he directed himself towards Tobias' grave. Jerome walked back and forth in *ambaru* fashion, holding up one hand in his ritualised pose, fighting the spirits of the dead: (Dead man saying) 'You and me, we gonna talk tonight./But we sleep, I got tell you tomorrow morning.' Jerome employed Tobias's voice and wording of a widower's song. The 'talk' in this type of songs had the connotation of sexual intercourse; the implication in this one was that before they had sex, something had to be settled. In the next song Jerome made this clear: (Jerome asking the dead man) 'Where is your sister?' Jerome claimed a sister of the dead man for himself. He acted out the role of an *ambaru*. Sexual jealousy and proposals of fights related to women might be conventional subject matters of the performance but that did not mean these role-attributions were entirely fictional. Jerome created trouble for Tobias because he desired a 'sister' of this brother-in-law in return (see section 3.2). Likewise his role here was characterised by aggressive behaviour. The shark chasing its prey often represented the jealous aggressiveness of the *ambaru*. Jerome was an excellent performer of the shark dance, choreographed by his great-grandfather Korupu when a shark passed his bark canoe in the 1870s (cf. Pilling 1976: 269). Korupu donated his name for the shark in the accompanying song to his son, who in turn passed it down to Jerome's father. Jerome in the present type of song had to use one of his father's names instead of one of his own. He chose the name of the

shark marked by Korupu in his song: 'I am Kurupulimirri, cutting with my dorsal fin through the water.'[161]

Jerome told me he would sleep after he had sung a certain text a few times, but later he would start singing again. It became colder during the night (the temperature dropped 15 degrees centigrade). Jerome was wearing only a loincloth, and tried to warm himself at his campfire. At one stage he said he saw a jungle fowl, named *korupu*, which was calling out. Jerome told the bird, his *dreaming*, to go away. The campfires were burning high at 3 a.m. It was cold. Now and then I tended our campfires. The fires were also burning high as protection against the spirits of the dead. To this purpose Jerome, in addition, would place a mirror behind his head.

At 5.40 a.m. I awoke to Jerome's humming. He sat at his campfire, wrapped in a blanket, 'lining up' his first song of the day. He sang: 'I am Tumaturapuwi (a male jungle fowl) calling out./The dead man is getting awake./I am calling out "kurau", and shake my two wings to wake him up./(The dead man says) Why are you coming around and wake me up in the morning?' Jerome 'marked' his *dreaming*, the jungle fowl. His task as a ritual worker was to keep the spirits of the dead at bay. First he had to awake them, starting with Tobias' spirit. The shaking of his wings represented the ritual worker's fighting pose, moving one arm above the shoulder and the other in front of him. Jerome's 'wings' here were the blades of his axes. He whispered to me that he had seen the dead man the previous night taking away the woman he was after (Tobias' clan sister). Tobias was Jerome's brother-in-law and therefore the dead man teased him in the next song-verse: (Dead man saying) 'You gammon [pretend to] dance and those fellows all are clapping for you./Maybe you will faint around the ceremonial ring (*milimika*).'

Jerome thought himself to be a good dancer but he was drunk. He began and ended this mourning song like all members of his patrilineage with the words of warning of his great-grandfather Korupu at Matalau, *ninka-ninka-ninka* and *korupu-korupu-korupu*. (the name of Korupu here refers to a shark and to the call of jungle fowl, and at the same time it is an abbreviation of *kurupwari* or 'emotionally disturbed'). He had painted his body and face with black charcoal and put a white line across his face. Jerome went around the burial place and struck the trees with his axes to chase the spirits of the dead away. He called out to these spirits: 'Hey, you!' (*awiiii*). Jack went to the grave and performed a mourning song pretending the spirit of the dead man wanted him to support his dance early in the morning: (Dead man saying) 'Come up and clap for me!/I want to dance.' Jack cried, wailed, and called out: 'My son!'

The polemakers from Bathurst Island had produced relatively small poles, without a black background, and left partially undecorated. The ritual workers from Melville Island were annoyed by this. Jerome threatened to

'cut them off' and transfer the money to those people who had made large poles (that is, to himself). The previous night he had been arguing about it with Tobias' children and with Jack. Jack now agreed with Jerome that these ritual workers had not performed a proper job. He had contracted senior men but he judged the results as 'schoolboy-work'. Jerome reminded Jack that in the old days the commissioned artists who were unable to satisfy their employers were put to death with spears. Jack directed himself towards Tobias' children. He told them they had not to pay much to the Bathurst Island polemakers. Instead of 50 or 60 dollars per person to each of these ritual workers they only ought to pay 10 dollars, Jack said; that was enough for that work of 'little children'.

Jerome continued to go around hitting the hardwood trees at the burial place with his axes. This 'killing trees' was meant to scare off spirits of the dead. He also struck one of the remaining mortuary poles at Minapini's grave. Jerome was not fighting the spirits of Tobias and his deceased father, but the spirits of his competitors (his 'friends' or *mamanta*) who married into the same clan(s) as he did. Nancy commented on this performance: 'Just like they got their friend boy, that dead man and Jerome jealous of those spirits of the dead (*mopadruwi*).' Jerome, walking back and forth, lifted the axes (with the blades upright) over his head. He marked his 'grandfather' Nokota (FFFS) who used to dance in this way, while he sang: (Jerome responding to the *mopadruwi* who asked him why he came there) 'I am Kurupulumirri./I came all the way from Taparulukwalimili and I got two axes./I am Patingumili and I got those two axes and I came to Pawularitarra first thing in the morning to kill you, spirits of the dead.'[162]

In the camp of Steven Tampajani and Tobias' children, Steven's wife (*ambaru*) faced the grave and sang for her husband: (Dead man saying) 'I slept well because my brother was near me.' Steven had expressed his wish to be buried next to his classificatory brother Tobias (which happened a month later).

People from Bathurst Island who had crossed the sea strait were approaching the burial place. Lionel Jatukwani, one of the *ambaruwi*, came through the old settlement of Pawularitarra. He stopped every twenty metres or so, sang, and moved further in the direction of the grave, until he finally reached it. In his song-verses he expressed that the spirits of his dead 'friends' were hungry to kill. He ought to go back, so he said, but being a shark he could not be scared off: 'You gotta care for yourself, maybe these spirits of the dead eat you [kill you]./You gotta go back!'; (Somebody talking to him) 'You gotta go back!/People here are ready to kill!'; (The singer) 'I am a shark.'

At the other side of the open space a truckload of people from Milikapiti arrived. Jessica (*ambaru*) jumped out the back of the truck. She faced the grave of her ex-lover and sang: (Dead man saying to her) 'I cannot swear at you, you are still *pukamani* to me./Why you came first in the morning and sit with me?' She indicated the dead man could not make love

to her because she was still under mourning taboos as her son had committed suicide the previous year. She blew kisses to Tobias' grave expressing they had been lovers (a lover of her mother had done the same to her mother's grave). Jerome performed another song: 'I am big waves from Waru [burial place of his FF] and these big waves go to the dead man's grave, washing it away: plruh! [sound of waves].' A sister of Tobias' last wife (*ambaru*), who had camped at Pawularitarra, sang: 'Why don't you sing?/I am your sister-in-law.' Tobias had been a charmer; he liked to compose love songs. The singer stressed Tobias was dead because he did not sing for her. Steven's wife (*ambaru*) sang: 'All my *mamanta* [friends] are waiting for me./They all got big sticks [to hit me].' She stated the other women of her quasi-moiety would be jealous of her approaching the deceased. Her husband, Steven (*mutuni*), sang: (Dead man saying) 'What's wrong with you?/Are you sick?/Why didn't you take notice when our father Minapini was talking?' Steven ought to have painted himself up like a sneak attacker, and he would have to avenge his 'brother' Tobias' death, but he was ill.

The number of people at Pawularitarra rapidly increased. Many people came from Nguiu. It seemed spatial distance to the grave coincided with people's social distance to the deceased. More coloured fabrics, mainly of locally produced Tiwi Designs, were put around Tobias' grave. These materials were put on a line alongside the mortuary poles bordering the grave area. Male ritual workers from Melville Island erected their poles in a straight line (thereby including an old pole of Minapini's grave). A shade was made for Tobias' daughters by their menfolk. Their classificatory father Bruce Kerimerini painted their faces. They also splashed themselves with white ochres and put on ceremonial paraphenalia. Simon and his family had come by car early in the morning.

Roger had come by boat. He said he had left Pularumpi the previous night but he had run out of fuel. Now the cattle truck with the other people from Pularumpi arrived as well. Nancy (*ambaru*) sang loudly: 'My clan sisters are all talking about me, listen, big mob of women talking about me: "If she comes smart in this place, well, we give her a good hiding."' She kept singing when coming from the truck and moving towards the grave. In Jerome's camp Nancy collected a black skirt and top from my wife, an outfit she had especially designed for her performance in the final rituals. She had also composed the next song. She first planned to sing it herself but then gave it to her half-brother Alec (*ambaru*): 'I am big waves./I came with big waves and I covered them up at Matalau./My clan sisters got all wet.' Lionel Jatukwani repeated his earlier song, facing the grave, and added: (Dead man saying) 'You and me, we have just been arguing./I might knock you down!'

Perhaps 800 people had come to see the final mortuary rituals for Tobias. An exact count was hardly possible because people were sitting dispersed in the bush.

First, the Melville Island group and Bathurst Island group each held cleansing rituals with smoke at a distance from the graves, directly followed by an *ilanigha* ritual of both groups together. This was a ritual previously conducted by the Bathurst Islanders. The subject matter of dance and song was Tobias' father's dreaming (or *irumwa*, his FF's *imunga*), the red woolybutt tree flowers. There were a lot of woolybutt trees, blosoming red, in the area around the graves of Tobias and his father. The large group of performers depicted these flowers in the trees by putting their hands on their heads. Jack Munuluka sang: 'Red flowers, Minapini.' He called out, 'Minapini' and 'Alukutarini' (man of the red woolybutt tree flower clan, Tobias' FF). Jack continued his song-verses: 'Lovely sunshine, making the flowers hot./Mirkutimala [Tobias' FF], the flowers are all falling down [on his grave in Tikelaru on Bathurst Island]./Two places [Melville and Bathurst Islands], all flowers are laying down./All flowers are standing up at Minapini's grave./Purarimukuna [Tobias' 'brother' Steven's F] got all those flowers and he put them on his lap./Kamelatianganumau [Jack's MM, who assisted Minapini in fights] is carrying the flowers on her lap./The flowers are all laying down at Minapini's grave./All flowers go to Wulintu [Tobias' dreaming place, the seat of his father Minapini's clan ancestress].' The accompanying dance was a slow one; it would be followed by a quick and energetic dance in the next dance ritual.

Both groups then came together around a huge tree for a small ritual called *urukupua*. A fire was lit at the base of the tree, and one person after another held the tree and made a ritual call.

Then both groups gathered at the ceremonial ring of the Bathurst Islanders, where a series of *ilanigha* rituals were held with the dance of throwing up dirt (*kutungura*).

Finally, this series of rituals was concluded with a mock fight between (potential) spouses, called *paumati*. People were hitting each other with green boughs to 'chase the *pukamani* away'. Nancy sang: (The wives of the dead man saying) 'Why are you showing off?/What about your husband?/Why did you leave your husband behind?'

After this there was a break. A priest from the Bathurst Island Mission said mass under the shade of the Bathurst Island group. It was only attended by a handful of people. Most of the people went a ways from the ceremonial grounds to have some food. Tobias' stepdaughter Ruth had a mug with water placed to her lips by her husband. Being painted up, wearing the appropriate ceremonial ornaments, and following the mourning taboos, she demonstrated she was 'really *pukamani*', seriously bereaved. In contrast to her sisters she had not spent the night near Tobias' grave. Isaac had hung his pair of shorts and wallet in a plastic bag on top of the shade of the Melville Island group. After this interlude, time had come for the grand final ritual.

The postfuneral rituals at Pawularitarra (2)

With a long honey call to greet the deceased, the men in both ceremonial grounds started the final ritual or *iloti*. The final rituals, one performed by

the Melville Islanders and one by the Bathurst Islanders, were held simultaneously. Instead of treating them separately, I will follow the Melville Islanders' ritual and deal with ritual of the Bathurst Island group intermittently. In order to complicate matters no more than necessary I will mention the bereavement status of the performers in brackets without specifying their precise relationship to the deceased any further (for this see tables 1 and 2, chapter 5) because their bereavement status suffices to determine their specific ritual roles.

Basil Munuluka (*unantani pulanga*) performed the first song for the Bathurst Island group: 'I wouldn't mind to flog that murderer!'

In the Melville Island ring the ritual workers lit a fire. Once again the major participants in the mortuary rituals, the bereaved actual and classificatory children of the deceased, purified themselves in the smoke. The theme of this cleansing ritual was a steamship, an allusion to the progress of Tobias' spirit on his journey to the world of the dead. Theodore (*marauni pularti*) composed the first song: 'Big steamer, a lot of smoke is coming out of its chimney!' The men called out 'poop' when they, lifting their stretched arms, denoted the firing of cannons on a man-o-war. A second song about a steamer was performed by Theodore's brother Simon (*marauni pularti*): 'They put boiling that on the boat and making coming out cheeky smoke, big thing!'

Next Tobias' children (*mamurapi turah*) danced with spears as sneak attackers. They finished their dances by pinning down the spear and calling out 'turah' (a battle cry). Theodore sang for them: 'Maybe I don't know where he lives or sleeps (*maranukuni*) made him die!/All *mamurapi*, you fellows, want give him good hiding that man!'

Roger (*unantani pulanga*) initiated the dances of the classificatory paternal fathers and father's sisters. He sang: 'I been wanna get 'em axe, and cut his neck off.' Roger then was interrupted by Jack, who gave him instructions. The dance and song ceremony (*yoi*) was stopped to give the bereaved 'children' and 'parents' opportunity to cry at the mortuary poles. (This ritual episode is called *utruningkijerami*.) The ritual workers went ahead with sticks to chase the spirits of the dead away from the dancing ground and the poles, calling out 'hoi-hoi-hoi'. While the people were crying at the poles some of the ritual workers sang. Jerome, lifting his two axes, performed the following song: 'I am a shark and I have a big long mouth!/My throat and mouth are closing towards that grave.' Alec Adranango (*ambaru*) sang: 'I am losing my breath.' He further mentioned the burial places of his father and father's father as well as the place, Matalau, where Tobias' father killed the singer's father's brothers.

After the men in the Melville Island group had given a long mosquito call, Theodore composed the songs for the *mamurapi turah* because he was married to Tobias' stepdaughter Ruth. Tobias' bereaved children danced with spears, representing both the spirit children (*putaputuwi*) and sneak attackers (*kwampi*). Theodore sang: 'We *mamurapi* all had spears./We came

a long way from Puluwarupi [Cape Fourcroy in Tikelaru, where Tobias' FF was buried] with a bundle of spears./We knocked that tree down and made a little canoe./With the bundle of spears in the canoe we paddled across the Apsley Strait./We left the canoe here at the landing in Pawularitarra and took all the spears out of the canoe.'

Nancy (*ambaru*) sang, walking back and forth between the ceremonial ground and the graves: (Minapini saying to his grandchildren) 'You fellow didn't do the same when I was young teenager (*malakaninga*).' Theodore continued: 'When I was a spirit child I lighted the fire in the shade where the Lorula were camping and you fellow had all the light and make all light in the shade.'

In the Bathurst Island ring Bruce composed the first song for the *mamurapi*. It was also about the spirit children making an attack: 'You fly with machine gun on an aeroplane and shoot and bomb.' Harold (*marauni turah*) sang: 'See all the houses of these Lorula [quasi-semi-moiety of Tobias and Bruce]./I got the machine gun and fired at them./I went straight in and fired right in the houses./They didn't call out loud, they whispered because the machine gun was coming and all Lorula ran away.'

Colin Marshall sang for the people whose father's belonged to Tobias' clan (*kerimerika*): 'These spirit children couldn't throw spears at them./They saw them sleeping and gave them sorry.' These people danced in the same way as the previous category of dancers but held their hands over their hearts.

In the Melville Island ring Dimitri Papuruluwi (*kerimerika* and *ambaru*) composed the songs for the *kerimerika*: 'I am a spirit child, a little boy./I throw a spear in every house./One spirit child lights the fire and he runs fast.' ('Fathers' saying) 'Who are you?'; (The spirit child saying) 'I am a spirit child!'; ('Fathers' saying) 'Oh, you'll be a little boy coming up.' (The singer stating) 'This spirit child put his legs aside and thrust a spear into my heart.' Dimitri acted this out with a long stick he used in walking.

In the Bathurst Island ring Roland Pamantari composed a song for the next category of patrilineal bereaved, the *kiakiae*: 'When he was born they were saying: Oh, lovely little baby!'

Steven (*mutuni*) sang for the *mutuni*: 'He [the dead man] spit me on my cheek'. Richard Palurati (*mutuni*) sang: 'Big stick!/He got a big stick and smashed my cheek.' Jack (*unantani pulanga*) performed a song for his clan daughter Gay Kitiruta (*mutuni*): 'She went to Wulintu [Tobias' dreaming site, and the seat of Gay's clan ancestress] and half her face fell down on one side.' Among the Melville Islanders there were no people in this mortuary kin relationship to the deceased.

Basil (*unantani pulanga*) sang for the Bathurst Islanders of his bereavement status: 'All the women are swearing at me, saying I got big balls only.' So did Don Wangiti, who continued: 'I have sores on my balls and they smell.' And Jack: 'Somebody in Pularumpi has cut my penis, it's bleeding away./Maybe a *ningani* cut off my penis.' By suggesting a *ningani*, a spirit and dreaming of the Tipungwuti patrilineage, had caused the death

of his 'son' Tobias, Jack indirectly blamed his clan brother Kevin Wangiti. Kevin, however, did not attend the final ritual, but stayed behind in Pularumpi. He later told me he had been unable to come because he had the flu. It is likely that this raised Jack's suspicion towards him.

In the Melville Island ring Roger, who belonged to the same category of people, performed the following song: 'I am lying down and crossed my legs [sleeping].' Roger 'marked' his mother's lover Pleipokutji, who was probably his actual father, the last surviving son of Kantilla. Pleipokutji had composed this song for his son who had been killed at the Bathurst Island Mission: 'He plants the potatoes and all those potatoes are growing big./He gets long stick, sharpens it, and digs the potatoes out./He brings a bag full of potatoes to the camp.' The potato is a dreaming of the Munuluka patrilineage. The song seems to be deliberately ambiguous. In 'marking', as Nancy put it, the last surviving son of Kantilla he indicated he was speaking about Tobias, Kantilla's clan brother's last surviving son. Possibly Roger alluded to the trouble related to Tobias' violent death, namely Tobias' affair with Jasmine, Andrew Munuluka's wife (see also Jack's previous song). The killed man for whom this song was orginally composed happened to be Andrew's father's father, and, as we have seen, grandfather and grandson are conceptually one in Tiwi perception. Andrew's grandfather had been shot while he was collecting mangoes up a mango tree by a Filipino man who mistook him for a flying fox. After the tragic incident he died (cf. Berndt 1950: 293; Pye 1985: 34). In his dreaming dance Andrew used to depict the picking and eating of mangoes from a mango tree. In this final mortuary ritual Roger was overruled by Jack, although he himself was senior to Jack. He covered up this blow to his prestige by putting emphasis in addition on his natural father, who was second to Jack's father, instead of 'marking' his putative father. In other words, his song proposed that the Munuluka patrilineage was more closely related to the deceased and, therefore, Roger was the second in command instead of the actual boss in this ritual.

Isaac sang for Barry (*kiakiei*): 'He (dead man) got him and put him on his lap.' (Barry called Tobias *mawanyini* because he was his M'B'S. His mother was 'really sister' of Tobias' father because her father and Tobias father's father belonged to the same clan.) He danced as if he was carrying a baby on his shoulders.

The next category of people to perform were the matrilineal 'children' (*mamurapi pularti*), holding their fists against their lips in their dance and ending by turning their heads backwards as if they were drinking. Simon Pamantari (*marauni pularti*) composed the following song: 'I am crying for the feeding bottle./I was crying for milk at Pularumpi and then I went to to Pawularitarra./That's the one now, that's the milk I was looking for!/That's all I had in the feeding bottle./You put it on leaves and they drank it out./I am crying for milk, again./If you don't give me milk, I put dirt on you [dance *ampikatoa*, throwing up dirt]!' He called out: *'palimpalim'* (milk) and *'mangalingari'* (milk rushing up in the mother's breast).

In the following group of people this relationship with the deceased was reversed: they were 'parents giving milk' (*unantawi pularti*). These people belonged to the deceased's mother's clan and the clans his father could marry into. The subject matter of their dances, irrespective of their sex, was pregnancy, child delivery, and breast-feeding. Edmund Pamantari(*unantani pularti*) sang: 'I am nursing a little boy.' He called out: *'munkulatini'* (male foetus, that is, I am pregnant with a male baby). Further he sang: 'I got baby boy!/I got baby boy laying down.' Edmund danced with his hands holding his 'breasts'. Female performers in this category wiped their abdomens and backs as if in labour pain. Also they were dancing as if holding babies in their hands, to be put down in the dancing ground at the conclusion of their performance. Isaac (*unantani pularti*) carried out a narrative dance about childbirth. First, he stood in labour pain using sand instead of hot ashes to soften the abdominal pain and the pain in his back. Then he continued sitting on his heels still in labour pain and striking his back. Next, he 'gave birth' to the child and sunk down between his heels as if sitting on hot ashes. Isaac composed the following songs accompanying his dance: 'I am carrying, still carrying, pregnant, still baby inside./Maybe I have a baby boy inside me./I got a pain in my back./I have a male baby here and put hot ashes on my back./Hot ashes, and I sit on top of these hot ashes.'

Jerome supported his classificatory father Isaac in dancing behind Isaac's back with two axes. At the dancing ground of the Bathurst Islanders, Jack sang for this category of people who were clan members of the generation (in Tiwi terms) of the deceased's mother: 'They had a little boy at Wangaru./They had labor pains in Pularumpi and then they went to Pawularitarra.'

Following Jack, Bruce Kerimerini sang for the Bathurst Island clan (and quasi-semi-moiety or moiety) siblings of the deceased, the *paputawi*, including himself: 'I am my leg, cut off forever./I am ashamed of this leg./I didn't watch it and then something cut my leg off.' Bruce admitted that as Tobias' elder 'brother', he should have protected him and kept him from getting into trouble.

In the group of Melville Islanders it was Theodore who composed the song for these people. Like Bruce he sang about the conventional subject of an injured or lost leg, and he also made an allusion to the cause of death: 'I don't know which killer (*kwampini*) hit your leg./He stepped in the drain, fell down, and broke his leg.'

Paul (*putani*), a grandson of Mangatobi and the four men killed by Tobias' father at Matalau, danced the crocodile dance with a bundle of spears in a style employed by his father. The dance depicted the Tiwi attack on the mythological crocodile-man Irekopei. He came up like a crocodile and placed the spears, each time quickly scratching his leg, in a line behind him. Swiftly moving with his shoulder he marked the spearing of his grandfather by Tobias' father. In 1975, in the *iloti* for his father's brother, Tobias (who was a ritual worker then) had assisted Paul in a narrative dance about the killings at Matalau. Tobias in the dance replaced his father

thrusting a spear alongside Paul's chest. Paul's present dance made Tobias' previous performance square.

The final group of dancers were the ritual workers (*ambaruwi*). These were people either married to *mutuni* or *paputawi*. At the beginning of their dance their spouses marked this relationship by hitting their cheeks or legs. The theme of their performances was sexual intercourse, sexual jealousy, and defensiveness by a display of aggression (e.g., in the shark dance). In the Bathurst Island group, Lionel Jatukwani sang: 'You can't fight with me./I am a good fighter.' And Cecil Jatukwani: (Dead man saying) 'You show off to me but I gotta kill you today./All my sisters will be ashamed of me when I hit you.' Cecil had been married to Patty, a half-sister of Tobias.

In the dancing ground of the Melville Islanders Jerome composed the first song. He made an allusion to him taking the place of his late sister as a widow, wearing a black skirt, at the funeral. Now he, still dancing with two axes, had dropped his loincloth: 'He thought I was a girl, but he felt my genitals.'; (Dead man saying) 'If you were a girl,
I been want to do it right now, go straight to you.'

The other ritual workers, including Simon's sons and daughters, performed as well, making obscene dance movements. The next song was composed by Dimitri: 'He is jealous of me, all the rude words come out./I had a loincloth on, and he thinks I am a girl./He takes my loincloth off, and sees I am a boy.' His clan sister, Jasmine (*ambaru:* her actual brother and sisters performed as *kerimerika*, as they were related 'two way' to Tobias) danced as a widow, lifting her skirts, because she had been the deceased's sweetheart.

Then Jerome composed a song for Tobias' ex-lover Nancy: 'He tries to wave me, and he points to the mangroves.' That is to say, the dead man wanted to have sexual intercourse with her. Nancy in her dance took her top off. After her dance she performed a mourning song: (Dead man saying to her) 'I didn't know you would dance like this!'

The next phase of the mortuary ritual was the 'payday', the giving out of money (*auwuntikra'emi*) to the ritual workers. Theodore sang: 'We are giving them man-killing spears for their pay.' Tobias' actual and classificatory daughters sat at the poles collecting the money for the payments and distributing it. Their 'brothers', carrying spears, danced the money to each payee. Money was contributed mainly by the *mamurapi*, the *paputawi*, and both maternal and paternal *ununtawi*. It was interrupted by Isaac. Isaac showed the contents of his bag he had taken off the roof of the Melville Island group. His wallet with money was missing. '160 [dollars], money walleti', he called out, 'pakina police [get the police], pakina police!' Simon later commented that Tobias father's spirit had taken the money: 'He make 'em settle that.'

At the same time, the payments went on at the dancing ground of the Bathurst Islanders. Jack sang: 'Purimini (Minapini's maternal brother) made the double-barbed spears and they put them in line.' Here the money was

brought to each ritual worker in a dance marking a clan brother of the deceased's father. The persons who handed out the money danced moving around in small circles while lifting both hands. The money then was dropped behind the dancer's back, at the feet of the one who was to receive it.

Isaac had kept yelling at the side of the Melville Island people, where he attracted everyone's attention. He grabbed a spear and repeated his allegations of theft. Isaac's behaviour made it difficult to punish him because he would have immediately used the spear. The other suspected killers were absent (Isaac's 'brother' Oscar Pamantari had gone to Darwin, and two others had not come to the ceremony because they said they were sick). Thus on this occasion nothing came of the flogging of the persons held responsible for Tobias' death.

After the payments, the poles were lifted from the dancing grounds by the ritual workers and put around the grave. Jack and Roger jointly sang: 'At Cape Fourcroy [Watiutwapi], a place close by [called Kariupu, the deceased's country where his FF is buried] the ritual workers are pushing those mortuary poles, pushing them over./They take those mortuary poles and they are waiting for a boat./A big battle ship with many sails should go to Arapi [district where Cape Fourcroy is located]./Where are they?/Prililaula [Mosquito clan, clan of Tobias' father and his classificatory fathers Jack and Roger]!'

When the poles were erected at the grave the close relatives of the deceased threw themselves at the poles and the grave mound, crying, wailing, and hitting themselves. Jack sang: (Dead man saying) 'You can't leave me alone./You stay with me.' Nancy, Tobias' former lover and wife of his 'brother' Sam, sang: (Dead man saying) 'Let's go back home./I wouldn't mind stop my brother./Take him home!/Maybe we will have a big fight for you.'

Following these final songs the ritual was over, and the crowd went home. Jerome and a few other ritual workers cleared the area. They had a fire burning. I was told a few days later that Tobias' spirit no longer roamed around in Pularumpi. Following the ceremony, arguments continued about the small poles made by the men from Bathurst Island. Heather, who said she alone had spent A$1,380, and her sisters were dissatisfied with a pole made by a man from Milikapiti. Tobias had made a huge pole for a final mortuary ritual for that man's father, fourteen years earlier. Tobias' children had expected this man to return an equally impressive mortuary pole for their father.[163] Jerome, the principal ritual worker, was able to send his son to Darwin from his earnings in the final ritual, and let him buy an outboard motor.

8.4 Aftermath: Lifting of the last taboos (1991)

A death anniversary for Tobias was not held a year after his death, as usual, but on the day three years after he met his death in the Old Camp. This relatively lengthy period of time was mainly due to the abruptness of his death, involving foul play. The day and night of the first anniversary, Tobias' children were on Bathurst Island. Tobias' daughter Judy said it was too early to have an anniversary. It depended on their emotions, as did the release of the taboo on the names of their dead father. On October 29, 1991, three years after Tobias' death, the time had come to lift the taboos on his names and on the photographs depicting him.

Four days in advance, Tobias' eldest daughter Laura made it known in the Social Club in Pularumpi that she would have a death anniversary. A death anniversary in the Social Club meant the immediate family of the deceased would shout beer, and people would dance and perform mourning songs. A Catholic mass was to be said under the mango trees at Sam's place in the Old Camp. The news spread. 'We celebrate it', Kevin said to me, pointing towards the Social Club.

In the morning of the memorable day, photos of Tobias were shown around in the Old Camp. Every time these pictures had been looked at by a person they were turned upside down, folded into quarters, or hidden. In this 'open 'em up' of the pictures people gently touched them and commented on them.

A number of people were annoyed when the deacon, a non-drinker, decided he would say mass during drinking hours. About thirty people attended the mass near Laura's former hut in Sam's camp, facing the scene of the killing and in the direction of Tobias' dreaming place. In contrast to Jerome and Bruce, Sam came back from the Social Club, which opened at 4 p.m., for the mass at 5.30 p.m. 'Leave that beer for my little brother', he said. When the deacon proceeded with a rosary, Laura and her friend, Sam and his sons, and I went off to the Social Club.

In passing through the club people were shaking our hands because of the anniversary. Tobias' lover Jasmine sat down and rubbed her eyes. Jerome, my 'drinking mate', was sitting outside. As a result of his prominent role as a principal ritual worker in the final mortuary ritual for Tobias, his prestigeous performances and the exceptionally large pole he made, Tobias' daughters had become indebted to him. Jerome had been concerned about his son, Reuben, who had 'no girl', in 1989. Jack's eldest son had died in a boating accident but he had more sons, said Jerome. When his son would die, he said, he would be 'finished' because he had only one son. Instead of a sister of Tobias in return for his sister, Jerome, at last, got Tobias' eldest daughter Laura for his son Reuben. In October 1991, he told Tobias' daughter Heather to come to Pularumpi, in addition. Her affair with Reuben was of short duration. Laura was not amused. She threatened Reuben's sisters with a wooden club because they had to keep their brother in check. The two sisters had a fight, focused more on deterence than a full-

scale fight. Laura went around with a thin stick, not a very effective weapon. Lifting the stick, she explained it was because they had 'one father'. Heather stressed they could not fight, they were sisters and daughters of the same father. Laura could have Reuben for herself again.

Outside the Social Club, Jerome made clear he wanted to have beer from Laura, who had had her payday, and had announced the death anniversary for her father: 'I am the widow', he said, 'I went there with two axes.' Jerome continued, 'They should worry about me first but they only worry for themselves.' Laura, Reuben, and others were sitting inside with a large number of cans of beer. 'I gonna kick them out [of his house] tonight, kick them out', Jerome said, 'I am the widow. They are sitting there [drinking]. They should ask me in.'

While I was acting the role forced upon me as a go-between, Jerome had got up and walked back and forth in the middle room of the Social Club. He kept telling people about the reason for his anger, pretending he was about to leave. When I passed money and beer from Laura and Reuben to Jerome, and told him it was not my business, he whispered, 'I might change my mind.' He took out two dozen cans of beer before the locker closed and put it away. Next, while yelling, he entered the room where Laura and Reuben were sitting. Laura cried. Reuben sat motionless. Sam's son Mike, the former police tracker, wailed loudly. He told Jerome to go out, waving with his hand, 'Go!' Laura cried but Jerome went on. He performed a mourning song (in *ambaru* style): (Dead man saying) 'You fellow should give him first./I am sorry for him [Jerome] at Pawularitarra.' Jerome shouted, 'You should have asked me in, not leave me there outside. I'm not a dog!' Laura countered, 'Beer, beer...always beer. You didn't go church, just for beer.' Jerome's body posture signalled his fierceness. He uttered a threat, 'That spirit, spirit...', meaning Tobias' spirit might do some harm to them if they did not treat him properly. He stood behind Laura and put his hand on her shoulder, while lifting the other hand, he sang: (Dead man saying) 'Why please yourself?/Why you fellows please yourself?/You didn't think of my brother-in-law.'

Nancy supported her 'brother' Jerome in his quarrel with Tobias' daughter. 'Far away', she said to Laura, 'It wasn't a Tiwi, *muruntani* [a white man].' She referred to the story about the killing that had gained currency in Pularumpi after the final mortuary ritual for Tobias: the white sailor who had been living together with Laura in the Old Camp had knifed her father. That man now was far away (*karampi*). In other words, Laura was told that she used to make the wrong decisions as to whom she was loyal to. Nancy performed a mourning song (in *ambaru* style) too: (Dead man saying) 'You fellows look at my picture, remind my picture.' The photographs with Tobias could be shown again, and his names be mentioned (although I did not hear them in the following weeks).

Symbolic and emotional aspects

Quite a number of the symbolic aspects of the mortuary rituals (as well as the mortuary aspects of the yam ritual) have already been discussed in the previous chapters. The participants enact various roles that imply a breaking of ties with the deceased, and at the same time constitute a new spirit of the dead with a reconstructed biography resulting from the sequence of performances by the various categories of personnel, assembling a remodelled and distanced social personality from multiple relational angles. Before the spirit of the deceased can leave the world of the living, his or her bonds with the living have to be broken, emotionally and symbolically. The mortuary rituals provide an opportunity to reflect on the shared experiences and relationships with the deceased (it can even be done as if in dialogue with the deceased). The bereaved state their loss, whereafter they are enabled to say farewell to the past. In the context of the rituals compassionate support and protection is given to the bereaved. Collectively, leaving room for and integrating ritualised personal experiences, the situation after the death is gradually redefined, and the social order recreated. Probably, the projections of a spirit of the dead help to mitigate the painful loss. The spirit of the deceased does not enter the other world as a nobody but as a ritually composed shadow figure, a reflection on the person when alive, so to speak. My informants said that related spirits of the dead came to the ceremonial grounds as well and carried out the rituals. It is at these times that the world of the living and the world of the dead meet. After the final ritual most of the taboos are lifted because the spirit of the deceased has irreversibly joined the spirits of the dead.

Tiwi mortuary rituals have much in common with Hertz's model of primary and secondary burials, although there is no actual secondary treatment of the remains (in contrast to some other Aboriginal groups, perhaps because in Tiwi eschatology there is no resurrection of the body). Hertz looks at the changing condition of the body, the soul (spirit), and the survivors in relation to the adjustment of the 'collective consciousness' to the social loss. To enable this process, a lapse of time is neccessary between the funeral and postfuneral or secondary rituals. The accomplishment of the rituals, the transition of the spirit to the other world, the period of mourning for the survivors, and in Hertz's case the decomposition of the body ('when the bones are dry'), coincide (Hertz 1960). We have seen that at the conclusion of the final ritual, *iloti*, the formal period of mourning (with the accompanying *pukamani* taboos) is over, and that the spirit of the deceased is supposed to have entered the other world.

In Tiwi mortuary ritual we do not have a secondary treatment of the remains but a treatment of tree trunks or poles. I was told these poles were erected at the burial or ceremonial place to keep the spirits of the dead there, to give the spirit of the deceased company (the best pole is usually put up at the head of the grave, if there is one). The presence of the actual grave is not neccessary for the final ritual but mortuary poles are, ranging from a single sapling painted white to more than twenty large elaborately carved

and painted polychrome poles. In the literature hardly any explanation is given of the symbolic value of these poles, other than these being vehicles for prestige.[164] I face a problem inherent in symbolic anthropology here, because in general Tiwi themselves do not verbalise the meaning of these poles. It is clear, however, that the mortuary poles are important. Metcalf suggests 'that there are some truths that are not expressed in words, and perhaps cannot be expressed in words. Those truths are unexpressed not because they are unimportant, but because they are fundamental.' He sees it as the task of anthropologists to elicit the implicit meanings (1982: 262-3). Let me attempt an explanation.

The ritual workers, who are the only ones who may dispose of the corpse, cut trees in the area that is perceived of as the deceased's country (Tiwi do not emphasise the buried corpse but the location where dead persons as spirits 'live'). The poles are preferably made out of the bloodwood tree (*wuringelaka*). A red substance resembling blood flows from the stem when this type of tree is cut. The so-called Melville Island bloodwood (eucalyptus nesophila) can be exceptionally large.[165] It is also a species demonstrating exceptional vitality: a sapling 'may shoot up to 2 or 3 m in a few months. Growth thereafter is usually rapid' (Hearne 1975: 61). Often spirits are connected with particular trees. The ritual workers remove the bark or 'skin' from the cut trunks, shape the poles in a desired form, and then these are dried and blackened above a fire. Next, they paint the poles with elaborate designs. The processing of the poles might be compared to the ritual processing of the bereaved; in both procedures the ritual workers are instrumental. I was told that when head-cutting was still a general practice (at least until the mid-1950s) the blood had to flow on the grave. Bereaved also 'go in fire' and are 'smoked', the fire being made by the ritual workers. The way of painting and the designs are actually regarded as the same as those applied to the bodies of participants in the final mortuary rituals. It seems the mortuary poles represent metaphorical bodies. In the final ritual they are held in wailing as if they were a substitute for the tactile presence of the deceased. There is, in addition, a symbolism of laying down with the connotation of death or sleep (e.g. in a dance movement, and in the 'laying down' during the first night of the yam ritual) in contrast to standing up. The Tiwi term for a mortuary pole is *apurununinginti*, meaning something like 'the one that is standing up'. These poles lay down until the final ritual, when they are erected, and the transition of the deceased to the world of the dead is completed. The external vitality, or life essence, of the durable bloodwood trees seems to be transmitted in this symbolic way to the spirit of the deceased in the other world (cf. chapter 5). In Tiwi cosmology, thereafter the related spirits of the dead, when properly treated, promote good hunting, luck, protection, and health of the living.

The final rituals involve a distribution of wealth - social capital, fabrics and large sums of money - and in the past, barbed spears and ceremonial ornaments. Kan, in his study of the Tlingit potlatch, speaks of 'double obsequies' while referring to Hertz's model. The characteristics of these

postfuneral rituals, to be found in the Pacific region (mainly Austronesian-speaking cultures) and among the American northwest coast Indians (also circumpacific), include the 'erection of imposing mortuary and memorial structures' and the distribution of wealth 'to enhance the donors' status and prestige' (1989: 283-5). Miles (1965) amends Hertz's model for the Ngadju-Dayak (Hertz' main ethnographic example) in stressing the importance of economic factors and states that the timing of postfuneral rituals is due to materialistic motives. These economic factors do play a role in the timing of Tiwi postfuneral rituals. Related to this the time is needed to turn these rituals into prestigeous occasions. There is considerable variation in Tiwi final mortuary rituals; some are more prestigeous than others.

The emotional aspects are equally important (see Hiatt 1961 about double disposals practised by Aborigines in Arnhem Land): time is needed to come to terms with personal loss. Reid (1979) argues that Yolngu Aborigines are better able to cope with their grief because the mortuary rituals as 'times for grieving' are alternated with 'times for living' so the bereaved can gradually adjust to ordinary life again. I believe this makes sense for the Tiwi too. Frequently, recently bereaved Tiwi persons also express their grief on ritual occasions for other deceased. During rituals the survivors may mourn at any time they are reminded of the deceased.

I do not claim that emotions of grief are universal and the same everywhere. To some extent these emotions expressed in a ritual context by Tiwi are standardised and institutionalised, even socially and culturally desirable, but this does not imply that these emotions by necessity are 'not really felt' (e.g., Durkheim 1968: 397, 397n.2). Osborne notes that when an important Tiwi man dies: 'Everyone jockeys for position and no one feels any real grief, although grief is simulated' (1974: 111n.2). Hart attributes the tendency of Tiwi people to hang around when someone is about to die to 'the all-pervasive character of Tiwi opportunism' (Hart & Pilling 1960: 91, 91n.5). Both Hart and Osborne clearly understand there is something at stake in Tiwi mortuary ritual, but in their views people's attempts to achieve political goals seems to be incompatible with feelings of 'real grief'. Hart goes so far as to call the ritual workers 'nonmourners' (ibid.), notwithstanding the fact that these people perform mourning songs and wail and grieve as well. The proposition seems to be that when emotions and politics are juxtaposed in mortuary practices the emotions cannot be 'real': the grief is simulated or it is merely opportunism. I see this as a stereotype of non-Western people, suggesting they are not sincere, that emotions expressed in mortuary ritual are not really felt, which is the connotation of the expression 'ritual grief'. Can other people be denied these feelings? How do we know? Durkheim, for instance, gives an example concerning the expression of emotion in an Aboriginal mortuary ritual: 'If, at the very moment when weepers seem the most overcome by their grief, some one speaks to them of some temporal interest, it frequently happens that they change their features and tone at once, take on a laughing air and converse in the gayest fashion imaginable. Mourning is not a natural movement of

private feelings wounded by a cruel loss; it is a duty imposed by the group' (1968: 397). As I understand it, Durkheim here infers from a sudden shift in the expression of emotion that the emotions of grief are inauthentic, merely a socially desirable act. It struck me that Tiwi people switched their expression of emotion, but it always involved a shift in focus from one significant person to another one. The emotions, however, are relational (see Lutz 1988): Tiwi stress relational contents (with the exemption of avoidance relationships) by facing the other person.[166] When in this society emotions are relational and contextual phenomena, it is plausible that the emotions involved in one relationship (e.g., to the deceased) are different from those involved in another (e.g., to a joking friend). Hence, a person in grief directed towards the deceased will change emotional expression when facing a living person.

In this chapter we have seen that the grand final mortuary ritual (*iloti*) for Tobias was undecisive in 'finding out' who had killed Tobias and in carrying out a ritual punishment. This showed that plans might change when the situation is different than expected. People lived on whether there had been a retaliation or not. The attendance at night and some of the mortuary poles also did not meet the expectations of the organisers. I tried to demonstrate that Tiwi people were not automata or 'Durkheimian robots' (Loïzos 1992) following a custom to the letter. By and large the final mortuary rituals I described were enormous achievements. These rituals were the result of months of politicking. Hundreds of people came to look from all over the islands. Thousands of dollars changed hands in ritual payments. People put tremendous creativity and effort into it. I was told that a missionary who had been on the islands for more than forty years had said these were the largest rituals he had ever seen. I do not know how often he went to look but this major event was certainly a memorable and prestigeous display of the vitality of Tiwi culture. Tiwi had to adjust to the Anglo-Australian rhythm of work - meaning they could do their own things in the weekends - plus new means of communication and transport had been introduced and so many people could attend the rituals. While I demonstrated how Tiwi incorporate many elements of modern Australian society, I also showed that this is done in a selective manner that does not necessarily compromise the distinctly Tiwi value and belief systems.

The rituals have to be seen as embedded in an ongoing social process. We have seen how songs in particular were used in social discourse. I now turn to the changing range of people accused at different times of the killing, and the reasons for those accusations.

9 AN ACE OF HEARTS: CULTURAL POSSIBILITIES

9.1 'A person or persons unknown'

I do not pretend to know who actually killed Tobias. The evidence is far too circumstantial to draw far-reaching conclusions. The ethnographic data presented in the previous chapters are not intended to establish who committed the homicide, for this would require the supplement of a lot of other evidence (and it is doubtful if this could be given in Anglo-Australian judicial terms, in view of the detoriation of the scene and the lack or destruction of empirical facts favoured by forensic science). In chapter 7, I demonstrated how dangerous it can be to jump to conclusions too quickly: Kevin could have been in jail literally for life. There seemed to be 'hard' evidence of a confession to the murder in a record of interview with the police. This evidence 'in writing', however, merely reflected an unequal situation, a situational context. It is by no means a clear-cut case. There exists no proof that the killing of Tobias was 'murder'; it might have been an accident, we do not know. It will probably always remain a homicide committed by 'a person or persons unknown'.

As far as the Tiwi are concerned, there were different views (plural) and these could change over time. These views and comments might have been suggestive at times but they were certainly not conclusive. The local voices I recorded fit in with particular contexts, and as these contexts altered so did people's views: views that were taken with concern to loyalities to other people, the prevention of possible consequences for others (and indirectly themselves and people closely related or befriended), the prevention of the embarrassment of others, and speculations with regard to uncertainties as well as views expressed to change other people's behaviour in other matters, to achieve political aims, or views with recourse to redirect blamings by others. Consequently, statements must not be taken at face value. Undoubtly, there were many people who wanted to know, who made inferences based on their experience, and followed the lead of clues. But here too were different perspectives. For example, as I mentioned before, 'relations' have to 'speak up' for each other.

Tiwi people's 'truths' and our 'truths' can never be seen as disconnected from a particular context. They are always, as Clifford calls it, 'partial truths' (1986: 7). With this understanding I have tried to look at the homicide case, one that challenges anthropological interpretation (cf. Keesing n.d.) from an ethnographic angle. I attempted to do justice to the

different points of view that I encountered in Tiwi society in the context of my fieldwork period as 'current history' (Moore 1987). Through this approach I arrived at what Tiwi people with their horizon of reference considered possibilities and combined these with ethnographic generalisations. What I am after is not proof but cultural possibilities (cf. Davis 1986: viii).

In the following two sections I recapitulate the background of the kind of trouble the later homicide victim was involved in shortly before his death (section 9.2) and that trouble itself (section 9.3). The background of that particular series of conflicts or trouble highlights the background of 'trouble' in Tiwi society in general. Then I discuss the people who were blamed for the killing by the Tiwi themselves and the social context of this blame.

9.2 Background of Tiwi 'trouble'

Two principles in Tiwi social organisation that in practice are not or cannot always be adhered to appear to be connected with underlying tensions in this Aboriginal society. The first principle is the ideal exchange of marriage partners in a balanced manner between matriclans (*keramili*). The second is that ideally 'brothers' cooperate, support and protect each other. In practice, people are unevenly distributed over the clans (in number, age, and gender) and it takes time for an exchange of partners to become even, if it is effectuated at all. And while 'brothers' are supposed to cooperate, they are at the same time competitors for the same category of women.[167] These contradictions lead to conflicts. Furthermore, conflicts arise from the contradiction between the expectation that people have extra-marital affairs and the formal ideal of marital fidelity.[168]

As mentioned before, Tiwi people are striving to obtain influence and prestige The number of women attached to a man and the number of his offspring are indexes of prestige.[169] Fierceness and aggressiveness of males, being 'cheeky', is culturally valued and serves to deter competitors. Sexual jealousy (*tulura*) is another important aspect of Tiwi life and one that may be combined with aggression and violence.

In Tiwi polygynous society before the enforcement of Anglo-Australian law, quite a few men were killed in sneak attacks, spear 'duels' and fights.[170] A number of the surviving males had to remain bachelors all their lives, while on the other extreme, a really influential man could count between twenty and thirty wives as his. Such a man could have an enormous reproductive success, a large actual (and perhaps putative) offspring. The decendants in the second descending generation tended to form a coalition (one-grandfather-group or *aminiyarti*) supporting each other after his death. When the Tiwi institution of sneak attacks (*kwampi*) was still in operation,

most homicides were directly or indirectly related to trouble over arrangements involving women.[171] The impression one gets from the ethnographic literature is that this was a general tendency in Aboriginal societies.

When the *Pax Australiana* was established on the Tiwi islands, with mission and government settlements as total institutions, the indigenous pattern of homicides went underground, and 'poisonings' replaced the former sneak attacks. There is no doubt that these 'poisonings' (whether killings by sorcery or actual poisoning) again were women-related. In the 1970s and 1980s the change in government policy concerning Aborigines, from 'assimilation' to 'self-determination' or 'self-management', resulted in a weakening of the direct and tight control over Tiwi internal affairs by outsiders. A series of homicides emerged in which the victims were stabbed to death with large knives. According to my male and female informants, all these killings were, directly or indirectly, women-related. The issues over which people were killed had remained the same.

This relatively new mode of killing, however, differed from the former institution of sneak attacks on at least three points: knives replaced spears as the almost exclusive weapon, residence of killer and victim was no longer by necessity in different localities, and the killers employing knives, as with the 'poisonings', no longer openly revealed their identities. These modifications coincide with altered circumstances in Tiwi society: there are hardly any effective spears around in camp anymore, whereas steel knives are in frequent use. People now live together in three large-scale townships, in contrast to the former relatively small bush camps spread over the islands. And although Tiwi are somewhat more at liberty to manage their own affairs, the Australian police is firmly based on the islands and the involvement of the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system is unavoidable when someone has been stabbed to death. Protection by co-residents, considering the homicide justified, is also less effective in view of police intervention and the presence of those who have stronger ties to the victim. Possibly, the killers therefore do not reveal themselves as openly as in the past (by pulling out their beards and painting their bodies with white clay).

How is it possible that people are being killed by others in this face-to-face society in which all people are related in one way or another and are supposed to show compassion? I have tried to demonstrate that people, with the exception of accidental killing, usually were not killed without premeditation. A prospective victim had committed a serious wrong or wrongs. To prevent an escalation of a conflict, a wrongdoer could move away. The person in question got warnings. As the present case shows, in the case of a persistent wrongdoer, a number of grievances and old grudges could be united into one (cf. Sansom 1980). A homicide was, in a phrase of Daly and Wilson, the 'most drastic of conflict resolution techniques' (1988: 10). We have seen that Tiwi killers in the past pretended not to 'know' their victims.[172] In late twentieth century Tiwi society the consumption of alcohol was accepted as an excuse for 'not knowing' the victim. The aggrieved

temporarily put the bonds between them and the people to whom some serious harm or a wrong had been done over their ties with the wrongdoers. After relatiation, evening the score, and/or their anger been diminished, they might feel sorry for the (prospective) victim (cf. Myers 1986a).

9.3 Recapitulation of the trouble before the killing

Tobias had lost three wives in tragic ways, and was in deep grief over his last wife's death. Jasmine reminded him of his deceased wife. About a month before Tobias' death, Jasmine's husband learned he had been made a cuckold. The deceived husband fought with Tobias and injured him. An ordinary case of adultery would have ended here. Andrew, the husband, had punished the wrong. After some time, Andrew found Tobias and his wife together in Tobias' hut. Andrew demanded compensation (a large amount of money) from Tobias, as this was an established means to settle the matter. Tobias refused to pay it.

When Tobias began to call Jasmine his wife, he ran into conflict with her stepfather Isaac. A Tiwi father could act against anyone who unjustly tried to secure his daughter. Isaac was one of the most important persons Tobias had to deal with to arrange an eventual future marriage with Jasmine (of the Pandanus clan, *miartiwi*), because Isaac (of the Stone clan, *pungalawila*) had secondary rights, the rights to arrange marriages for her not already settled by her father (when a stepdaughter was not yet delivered to her husband the stepfather sometimes could obstruct the deal). Isaac was Tobias' 'mother's brother', his 'full uncle', and supposed to help his 'sister's son' to get a wife. When Isaac was fairly young, Tobias' father had given him a widowed clan sister as his first wife. Consequently, Tobias could expect Isaac to give him a wife in return. Isaac had attempted to get Tobias' daughter Laura (of the Mosquito clan, *wulintuwila*) as his wife but she did not want him. Therefore, Isaac strongly objected to Tobias having his stepdaughter. Whe have seen that on the night of the killing, when Jasmine's husband was away, Tobias wanted to talk with Isaac about something but Isaac did not want to know about it.

Another man who was angry with Tobias was Jerome (of the Pandanus clan, *miartiwi*). Jerome had given Tobias his half-sister (Tobias' second wife) and claimed he had not got a 'sister' of Tobias in return yet. Jerome argued he should have a clan sister of Tobias also because he had organised postfuneral rituals for her father. This woman, a daughter of Anna (of the Stone clan, *pungalawila*), was married to another man and had been promised to another man altogether, although Jerome disputed this for he had been told she was his 'promise'. As a senior man in Jasmine's clan, Jerome could exert influence on the future marriages of his clan sister Jasmine too. For Tobias to enter into a new marriage deal, as far as Jerome was concerned, he first had to meet his old debt. Other informants (not of his clan but the Mosquito clan, the clan to whom the woman, according to

them, had been promised) considered Jerome's aspirations to get Anna's daughter too far-fetched. In between Tobias' death and the postfuneral rituals for him there was a long-lasting dispute, escalating in a series of serious fights, over this woman. Jerome had not been involved in this. During the final mortuary ritual at Tobias' grave he told me he had seen Tobias' spirit during the night taking this woman away from him, another way of saying he realised his chances of ever getting her had been lost.

Before Tobias met his death, Jerome, in pursuit of his own interests in marriage politics, accused his brother-in-law Tobias of being untrustworthy. He shouted to Tobias that his father was a killer (sons are supposed to adopt their father's character traits), Tobias had speared his own brother (an extremely serious offence), and he had attacked 'that old man' (Jerome's 'father' Isaac, another wrong). In this way he effectively rallied the support from his 'sister' Nancy (MFDD), Tobias' former lover and Jasmine's rival, whose 'fathers' (FBs) had been killed in an ambush by Tobias' father. On this occasion Tobias did not get support from his elder 'brother' Sam (FMSS), Nancy's husband. The two 'brothers', both of the Stone clan (*pungalawila*), were on bad terms. They had had a fight over Nancy. Besides, Tobias had killed his elder brother Jacob. In cases of a wrong committed within the clan, Tiwi matriclans, with consent if not participation of the senior representatives, ideally discipline their own members. Apart from Tobias, the most senior men in the Stone clan (*pungalawila*) in Pularumpi were Sam and Isaac, and the most senior woman present at the time of the killing was Anna.

Tobias had bad relations with at least two other men. He told me he did not trust Karl Hansen, the white sailor who was living with his daughter Laura. Karl argued with Tobias in the club and was said to have accused his father-in-law, in Tiwi terms, of short-changing him. He was also annoyed about the financial consequences of Laura supporting her father. It was Laura's responsibility to take care of her father, and to ensure he would eat sufficiently, because he was having 'a hard time' after the loss of his beloved wife. Tiwi perceived it as a real possibility that persons in deep grief would neglect or do some harm to themselves, and in many cases this was true. Karl raised strong doubts about Laura's fidelity. I witnessed Tobias warning him not to maltreat his daughter any longer.

Another man Tobias said he did not trust was Oscar Pamantari of the Fire clan (*kutaluwi*). This classificatory brother of Isaac (FBS) was a potential spouse of his daughters too, and a former lover of his stepdaughter Ruth. What is more, like the Stone clans the Fire clan had long-established relations of exchange of marriage partners (and lovers) with the Mosquito clan and the Pandanus clan. Women of the Pandanus clan, such as Tobias' stepdaughter Ruth and Jasmine's actual sister, were married to men of the Fire clan. Oscar happened to be a classificatory father of Jasmine. He was

obliged to assist his elder 'brother' Isaac in preventing any man from unjustly taking their 'daughter' Jasmine.

Finally, Jasmine's brothers had the right to protect their sister as well. She had been given to Andrew Munuluka in return for Andrew's clan sister Sally, the wife of Jasmine's brother Dick. The night of the killing three of Jasmine's brothers were in Pularumpi. Her adoptive brother Roy Mornington had followed Kevin to Dick's house (and been chased away by Sally). Dick came back from Milikapiti about 9 p.m. He had brought his younger brother Nicolas with him from this other township on Melville Island.

The list above suggests that Tobias' prolonged affair with Jasmine, whom he claimed as his wife, had far-reaching consequences in relation to the interests of a large number of people. He was virtually surrounded by people whose interests in marriage politics were harmed by the prospect of letting Tobias claim Jasmine. Tobias was well aware of the trouble he was involved in. It seems he was prepared to take high risks. In the weeks preceding his death he was warned in various ways. Nevertheless, he continued to see Jasmine. Tobias told my wife and I that he was tired and that he would 'not live for long'. When he had had a vision of a spirit of the dead, a conventional amonition of death, he became frightened. Gradually, he became he became more and more isolated. Tobias expressed that he felt lonesome, as all his actual brothers and sisters had died. Being with Jasmine comforted him. Although Tobias appeared to know his life was in danger and could have moved away to avoid an escalation of the trouble, he chose to remain in Pularumpi. In this clash of interests Tobias could not count on protection by his own clan (Stone clan, *pungalawila*) because he had had a hand in his own brother's death. A senior man of the Pandanus clan made clear he would not allow him to have another woman of this clan before he had met his old debt. On another level, he lacked the support from the people from his country, Tikelaru, because his father had been expelled from this country (although the most senior man of this country later denied a total ban). Tobias was short of 'sisters' to use in exchange for marriage partners. Like Tobias, his daughters were strong and forceful personalities. It is doubtful if he could or even wanted to force them, within a very short span of time, to take partners they did not like (re-arrangements that of course created new problems).[173] Tobias' antagonists in Pularumpi perceived him as a wrongdoer. He persisted in breaking the rules, and, more important, behind these sometimes contradictory rules were other people's interests. The initial conflict, a case of adultery, had escalated.

A Tiwi wrongdoer, as mentioned earlier, has the option to move away. Tobias had plans to leave Pularumpi. Despite his intentions to go somewhere else, saying he did not 'want the troubles', nothing had come of it until the

day of his death. The particularities occurring on this day may shed some light on the case.

In the morning, Tobias' eldest clan brother from Nguiu, Bruce, after a discussion with his younger brother Sam, visited Tobias and told him something. I was unable to find out from Tobias, Sam or Bruce what had been said. Bruce, however, gave me a hint when I discussed the matter with him. Pointing with his finger onto the spine at his back, he said, '*putani*...bad luck'. A *putani* is a man bereaved of a maternal actual or classificatory brother. Bruce's 'brother' Jacob had been speared in the back by his own brother Tobias. There had been precedents in the past that people who allegedly had committed a serious wrong were given up by their clan (see Pilling 1958). Perhaps Bruce indicated it was his bad luck he lost a 'brother' as a result of a homicide, as perceived by Tiwi, twice. Bruce might just as well have paid Tobias a social visit.

In the afternoon, it was said that Andrew had to go to Bathurst Island because his father was very ill and expected to die. The cattle truck that would bring him to Paru, where he would cross the sea strait to Nguiu, left from Sam's place. The detectives later obtained a statement taken by an Aboriginal police aide in which a sister of Andrew declared Andrew had been on Bathurst Island that night. When a Tiwi husband was away temporarily, the responsibility to protect his wife usually fell to her father (cf. Goodale 1971).

Around 4 p.m., Tobias went to the club. He drank beer and played cards. During the murder trial the forensic pathologist told the court he had found a card on Tobias' body, an ace of hearts folded into quarters. Assuming Tobias had the card on him before dropped onto the earth under the mango tree, there might be two explanations. Tobias might have cheated in the card game or the card had been superfluous. Another explanation is that the card was a message. Incomplete sets of cards were mostly thrown away. Cards that could not be used in a particular game were usually laid aside, and folding them would make the whole set useless for other card games. If he cheated, why would he take the trouble to fold the card into quarters and risk detection in doing so? Why was the folded card an ace of hearts? My hypothetical explanation is that this card was a communication between lovers. In the past Tiwi people had the inside of their hand painted when signalling, by waving and pointing, to a secret lover. At the end of the 1980s, they frequently used the expression 'number one' for things and persons that were desirable or important (e.g., number one boss, number one meat, or in the card play metaphor that one had 'won', 'number one', for desired goods obtained). The 'number one' in the cards is of course the ace. In Pularumpi the symbol of the heart (probably the type of graffiti best represented) for a lover relationship is just as common as in the rest of Australia. The play card, an ace of hearts folded into quarters, might have been used by lovers (who already had a fixed meeting place) to pass a message secretly in a public place.

9.4 Blame

The issue of culpability in an Aboriginal society is a complex and intricate one (cf. Elkin 1964: 118-21; Maddock 1988; Bohemia & McGregor 1991: 102). Who are guilty, for example: the senior men who give a verdict of capital punishment, or the young men, the actual killers, who execute it? What if the victim, considered a wrongdoer by consensus of a sufficient number of people, is outlawed? What one group of people, with grievances and grudges towards the person in question, regards as an offence might be ignored by others, the retribution for that wrong becoming another offence (cf. Pilling 1958). In other words, in conflicts there is more than one side, and in an Aboriginal society, a conflict between two people means the involvement of other people. When a conflict, or a series of conflicts, leads to a homicide this ultimate sanction might be justified for one group of people and an offence for another. In chapter 4 I demonstrated that these categories of people might overlap. It is therefore also important to see how these matters unfold over time.

In ritual and daily life Tiwi people act out 'inherited' character traits. Those of the victim have been extensively discussed. People are also seen in this way. Old grudges related to what his father had done more than eighty years earlier could be linked to Tobias. The escalation of a conflict might resurrect other troubles not directly related to the initial trouble. To come to grips with the background of a Tiwi homicide we need to know about the victim's biography and his relationships with the people he is dealing with over time.

In the final analysis it comes down to a clash of interests. People's interests are equally important in understanding in what manner an eventual retribution will take place. Sansom states in relation to Aboriginal fringe dwellers in Darwin that 'there are no structurally determinate consequences of homicide.' The way in which a retaliation takes place 'depends on particularities. These relate to the political status of the victim, the worth accorded to the alleged slayer by his associates, and the current state of intergroup relationships' (1980: 262-3). This statement is apt for Tiwi society too. We have seen that the victim was marginalised, the alleged killers were protected by the reluctance of local people to speak out, and the relationships with the offended close relatives of the victim were a matter of negotiating and rallying for support.

Yet another factor is at play. There was uncertainty about who had killed the victim and who was to be held responsible. It could be argued it had been the victim's own fault. The inquests and the ritual occasions meant to decide who had done the deed failed. The mortuary rituals dealt with the homicide emotionally, cosmologically, and juridically (e.g., the songs of revenge and the treatment of allegations). The former antagonists were brought together for a united core, promoting social cohesiveness, and therewith the management of conflict, by installing mutual debts. People had to adjust to the situation occurring in conjunction with processes of

regularisation such as in ritual or by an appeal to the conventional 'rules', the Law (see Moore 1975). Those sometimes contradictory rules had to be applied according to 'the factor of indeterminancy' (ibid.). The rules themselves may be indeterminate when not in favour of people's interests. Therefore, as Malinowski puts it, 'the relation of actual life to the ideal state of affairs, as mirrored in traditional morals and law, is very instructive' (1940: 84).

In an Aboriginal society, blaming other people is a tricky business: an allegation might come back like a boomerang. People are caught up in a political arena and have close-knit relationships with others.[174] Berndt writes, 'any accusation against or by one person inevitably involves others' (1965: 202-3). Tiwi people have many-stranded relationships and multiple identities; besides conflicts dividing people there are overlapping loyalties and ties binding them. This makes the course an escalating conflict will take hard to predict (cf. Hart & Pilling 1960). After a homicide the bereaved tend to direct their attention to people with whom the victim had bad relations. In this small-scale society a great deal about the intimate aspects of the lives of others is known. This is certainly the case with conflicts, usually noisy affairs when acted out or if not publicised otherwise (e.g., in ritual or at gatherings). Reid notes of another Aboriginal society in north Australia, 'The social identity and personal history of the dead person are basic data for inquiries into the cause of his illness or death' (1983: 111). This is an Aboriginal procedure and also the approach I have taken here.

Starting from the assumption that the homicide was related to 'woman trouble', as Tiwi put it, then two major issues might be identified. Both have to do with Tobias' lover relationships: the first is his illicit affair with Jasmine, the second his adulterous affair with Nancy, the wife of his 'brother'.

When looking at conventional ways of behaviour, Jasmine's husband Andrew would be the first to act against Tobias, but he appeared to have been away. Next her 'fathers' and brothers come into the picture. Her stepfather Isaac and her classificatory father Oscar had bad relations with Tobias. Isaac had argued with Tobias around midnight, the night in which he met his death. Whether Oscar had been in Pularumpi during the night of the killing was disputed. Of Jasmine's brothers, Dick had sworn off drinking and violence. He was a devout Catholic (or a 'good boy', as Tiwi of other inclinations say with some pity). Next in line were her adoptive brother Roy and her youngest brother Rodney, who both were in Pularumpi at the time. Concerning the second trouble, Sam could be expected to act against Tobias as a cuckold but not as a relatively closely related 'brother'.

Nancy asserted that Tobias had given her and Jasmine beer at the club and that he had kissed them (to say good-bye). If this is true, it almost certainly would have been taken as a serious provocation. I stress that this must only be seen as hypothetical, an attempt to understand who might be

blamed for the homicide from Tiwi points of view. Ill-feelings between the victim and the alleged killers were a prerequisite for the credibility of accusations (cf. ibid.: 112), and it was mainly these people who were blamed. The accusation of Kevin by the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system seemed had little credibility among Tiwi people.

The white sailor was a different case, as this man had argued with the victim. Not long after the killing he disappeared. It was only after considerable time, when distorted relationships between a number of Tiwi people involved had been cemented, that he was mentioned as the alleged killer. This man might be seen as someone with a motive but he might also be regarded as the proverbial scapegoat. It did do no one any harm - except that it weakened Laura's position vis-à-vis others (see chapter 8) - to accuse this man who had left and was not able to talk or to strike back. I now turn to the political ecology of blame in connection with the present case.

On October 29, 1988, when people came to the Old Camp to view the corpse, some justifications of the homicide were given: 'His father was a killer, now he is killed himself', and that the victim had speared his own brother. Tobias' daughters from the other township urged the killer to come out. In Pularumpi suspicions were raised against Jasmine's stepfather, Isaac. I was told in Milikapiti that Simon's elder sister Mary, a senior and influential woman of the Fire clan who was a member of the same *aminiyarti* as Isaac, had declared Sam had killed his 'brother' Tobias. I was further told that her daughter informed people in Nguiu about this allegation.

Sam in turn accused Oscar, a man of the Fire clan and a clan brother of Mary. Sam had ill-feelings towards Oscar related to another trouble (about women). Sam's 'relations', people with whom Oscar was in dispute, were said to have seen Oscar with blood on his shirt when coming from the Old Camp in the night of the killing. Sam told me that Oscar had not gone to Bathurst Island with Sam's brother Bruce, as Oscar claimed, but that he had walked to Paru (on Melville Island, opposite Nguiu on Bathurst Island at the other side of the sea strait) during the night. There he had been picked up by the cattle truck bringing Nguiu football players from Paru to Pularumpi the next morning.

On November 22, Oscar came to visit me late at night. In Tiwi terms we had a close and affective relationship. Oscar called me *mawanyini* (mother's brother's son). Obviously, he wanted to get the record straight. He said: 'I won't embarrass you but that old man [Sam] is still accusing me. But I was at Bathurst that night. I went away at two o'clock in the afternoon with Josua and Bruce. When I came back the next morning and they told me I couldn't believe it. Oh.... I have been police tracker for many years. I could follow the tracks and see who did it. Mike does his work but he doesn't think. He only does his work. When I came all the tracks were covered. I was there too late, the tracks were covered, all covered. I will find out. I just don't say much when I go to the club and listen. They will tell once when they are drunk, "I killed that bloke So-and-such". The Law is

still continuing, you know, still going on. Continuing.' Oscar further told me that the killing was 'about a woman'. 'It's not difficult to know', he said, but first he needed certainty -- and then, snapping his fingers, 'same way'. The police had charged the wrong person with murder, according to him: 'He didn't do it, he might have turned himself in.' He said again that he would find out who the killer was even if it took a year. It was only a small community, according to Oscar, and 'I don't talk much on the club and I listen.' In addition, Oscar said he ran the risk of being 'poisoned'. A Tiwi man on the mainland, married to Sam's sister, was 'in business' (a sorcerer). The man might 'poison' him because he was 'going around with another woman' (Oscar was married to Sam's 'brother's daughter'). During the night of the killing, Oscar said, he had been with his girlfriend, his 'second wife' Emmy, on Bathurst Island.

In the beginning of December, Sam was severely bitten by roaming dogs. It occurred when he came from the club late at night. 'I kicked', he said, 'but they didn't go away.' His wife commented that he had been attacked by the dogs 'because he didn't paint himself when it [his 'brother' Tobias' death] happened'. He had been bitten by dogs, his *dreaming*, and had to wear bandages where he should have painted his legs as a bereaved 'brother' (*putani*) of Tobias. At Tobias' funeral, in contrast to his brother Bruce who had wrapped bandages around his leg as a sign he was symbolically injured by the loss of his 'brother', Sam had neither identified himself as such nor had he performed songs and dances.

Later that month, a Tiwi man was set free from Berrimah jail in Darwin and returned to Pularumpi. I was told that he had said, Kevin 'is now finished', 'he is underneath'. The police told him that they were certain 'he did it alone'. On the basis of this information Isaac was swearing at the club that he had been falsely blamed.

In February 1989, the committal hearings took place in the Courts of Summary Jurisdiction in Pularumpi and Darwin. On both occasions Kevin told his relatives that he did not kill Tobias. Since Kevin had been charged with murder by the police, many Tiwi people told me that in their opinion Kevin had not done the deed. They backed this with what sounded like character references: he was said to be a 'good bloke', not 'the worried person' to have been a killer, and so forth. Dick, who had seen the knife taken from Kevin during the committal hearings in Darwin, asked me afterwards, 'Did you see that knife? It was not sharp, hey? It was not sharp!' He made a drawing of the blade in the sand.

The view that Kevin did not commit the crime was almost unanimous in Pularumpi. A small number of people gave him the benefit of the doubt. The only exception, a person who did not, was Kevin's rival Mike, the police tracker. After Kevin's arrest he had threatened he would spear Kevin 'like his grandfather', Tobias' father Minapini. Although Tobias was Mike's natural father, which placed him in the position to avenge his death, he did

not show this publicly. Tiwi sons normally 'follow' their father, but when this man maltreats their mother they take sides with her (cf. Pilling 1958; Hart & Pilling 1960). A few months earlier, Tobias had maltreated Mike's mother Nancy (malforming her nose). It was then that Sam had fought with his 'brother'. Perhaps, this was the reason Mike did not actively pursue a retaliation.

At the time of the hearing in Darwin, Nancy was sick. She, in this context (in other contexts as Kevin's 'mother' she stated Kevin could not have killed Tobias), held up the views of her son Mike (Kevin was the offender) and her husband Sam (Oscar had been the killer). And she still voiced suspicions towards Isaac. 'He [Isaac] should hurry up with the *iloti* [final mortuary ritual] for Oscar's sister. They might come and pick him up. Maybe he did it.' She added, 'It was going on on that place, not at our place. We didn't know. There were three people very near, who slept there. Kevin lived almost next door, and Isaac. And Oscar was there too that night.' Her son, the police tracker, told me that he now had two other suspects altogether. 'That morning' he had seen the foot tracks of a male and a female, he said. By their foot tracks he had identified them as two people who had still been sitting at the club when he picked up his girlfriend there. Mike said he maybe would ring the Criminal Investigation Branch of the police in Darwin.

At the end of March, the annual yam ritual would be held in Pularumpi. Isaac had composed a number of songs. When Kevin, who was released on bail, suddenly turned up the ritual was postponed. We were playing cards at Dick's house when, unexpectedly, Kevin arrived there. Nancy told me to keep an eye on her son Regis; she was afraid her son 'might get cranky'. Mike left his job as a police tracker. He went to stay temporarily in Arnhem Land with relatives of his sister's husband. He could not remain in Pularumpi, he said, because of 'family trouble'. Despite his former intentions, Isaac did not take part in the yam ritual. It was expected it would come out who had killed Tobias in this ritual, but no names of alleged killers were mentioned. Sam performed a song in which he stated he had been unjustly blamed by people from Milikapiti and Nguiu.

In the yam ritual at Nguiu it did not come out who had killed Tobias either. Allusions were made to Sam having been the slayer. Nancy defended her husband by shouting they had one father's mother (*amoa*), and, therefore, 'he would not do that'. Here Sam's brother Bruce, at the last moment, decided not to participate in the ritual.

Tobias' spirit kept bothering the living. Tobias' next-door neighbour, Geoffrey Adranango, who had been evacuated to Darwin Hospital at the time of Tobias' death, told me that there was something 'strange' going on at Tobias' place. At night, he said, he heard the door banging. He looked but saw nothing. 'There are two', Geoffrey said, 'the dead man and his wife, two spirits.' Early in the morning he heard her chopping firewood.

Geoffrey pointed to two pieces of firewood without ashes. 'They make fire there', he added. Geoffrey expressed that he feared those spirits but was safe because of his many dogs. In the beginning of May, shortly before his death, he said to me that Tobias' spirit had tried to strangle him.

Mike earlier had also feared strangulation by the dead man's spirit. He was staying in the hut in the Old Camp that Laura had previously shared with the white sailor. Mike told me he heard someone at his door late at night. He opened the door and saw the spirit of his father painted all in white. The spirit had attempted to get his hands at Mike's neck; Mike quickly locked the door.

A vision of Tobias' spirit preceded a more serious occurrence. In the morning of May 22, my wife was minding toddlers with a few Tiwi women. One of the women became upset. She said she saw Tobias' spirit entering a building under construction nearby. She predicted something terrible would happen. Instead of Tobias' spirit, my wife observed Isaac going into the building. In the afternoon, a female health worker and sister of the woman who had seen the spirit went by car to Dick's house. She wanted to pick up Martha, Tobias' 'mother' who was very sick and could not walk, to give her a bath at the health clinic. When she backed up the ambulance, Dick's baby, who had crawled under the vehicle unnoticed, was crushed under the wheels of the car and died shortly after. The little child was Isaac's 'grandson' of whom he was very fond. At the funeral, Jasmine, her sisters and younger brother, who had been sitting in Dick's yard when the accident happened, on instigation of Jerome, were punished with strokes of a stick on their backs because of their neglect.

In July, Mike had returned from Arnhem Land. He worked in the bakery so he could save money for the final mortuary ritual. This ritual would be after the murder trial, 'when Kevin is back'. During this ritual, so I was told, the senior members of Tobias' clan were entitled to say who had killed Tobias. 'Maybe they gonna give them good hiding or do it the same way', said Sam's daughter Maud, 'That mob makes that decision.' Sally stated it could be said after the ritual (*iloti*), 'They might do it the same way.' 'Straight away or at night, that's the Law', her husband Dick added. Tobias' daughter Heather and his elder 'brother' Bruce both told me it was two men from Pularumpi. In Pularumpi the names of Isaac and Oscar Pamantari were most frequently mentioned. In July there was another rumour, which was that Anna's son in Milikapiti, a clan brother of Tobias, had been told it was two other men, namely Jasmine's adoptive brother Roy and her youngest brother Rodney. Mike and Maud were shocked by this. Mike said, 'I don't want to live here anymore.'

Oscar, Rodney, and Kevin were absent from the final mortuary ritual. A few allusions were made as to who might have killed Tobias but no retaliatory actions were undertaken.

The Tiwi people who blamed and the Tiwi people who were blamed all belonged to four matriclans (Stone, Mosquito, Pandanus and Fire) which

between them exchanged marriage partners. A 'trouble' between two individuals could in time involve many other people and be related or a 'reason' for many other troubles because the webs of relationships woven in marriage politics had numerous intersections.

After the final mortuary ritual for Tobias, Sam's daughter told me that Tobias' spirit no longer went around in Pularumpi. The possible destructive actions of the spirit had thus been neutralised, the spirit appeased. As Simon told me beforehand, the mortuary rituals for 'our friend who died in the Old Camp' would be 'something special, different', proper rituals like in the old days (*palingari*). People were also afraid of the spirit of Tobias' father, who in Tiwi ways would have to avenge his son's death. Nancy explained, 'He is *unantani* [father bereaved of a child]. He was murderman, really murderman.' In Tiwi eschatology Tobias' spirit had to follow his father. Elaborate mortuary rituals, as in olden times, were considered necessary in order to appease the vengeful spirits of Minapini and Tobias. The disappearance of Isaac's money was attributed to the spirit of the victim's father.

A year after the homicide a new story had gained currency: the white sailor who had lived with Tobias' daughter in the Old Camp had killed him. The man had suddenly disappeared a fortnight after Tobias' death. He had not even taken the trouble to take his belongings with him. Tobias' classificatory father Roger said the police had found out that it was not Kevin (his clan brother) who had done the deed but the white man: the fingerprints were 'too big'.

In 1991, two years later, new elements had been added to this story, still popular in Pularumpi. The white man's Norwegian nationality had changed into German, 'police got him', and he was 'in jail for life.' As might be expected, a sergeant of the police in Darwin assured me this was certainly not the case. Jerome said to me, 'They picked on that old man, Isaac [his 'father' and the man who named him]. But he wasn't. Was probably a white man, a German bloke.'[175] A local Aboriginal man told me about the homicide investigation of the police detectives, 'They were just not interested. They were not really interested. It is only a community of 300. Everybody knows.'

As to who had killed Tobias, Tiwi people 'knew' different things at different times. I tried to show that these multiple views, which change over time, can be understood when these are placed in a situational context. The extended case history demonstrated that indeterminancy and heterogeneity have to be taken into account in a study of Tiwi culture.

10 CONCLUSION

The strength of Tiwi culture amid change has been central to my argument. At first glance a tragic event, a homicide, that occured during my fieldwork seemed to be puzzling. How could this act of violence be understood? If this instance of so-called Aboriginal crime has to be primarily related to alienation as a result of colonisation and excessive intervention of alien agencies, how do we account for the high rates of homicide reported for the pre-colonisation era and for Aboriginal perceptions of conflict and violence being meaningful? The content of my argument is that at least in Tiwi Aboriginal society, which has been under missionary influence for most of the twentieth century, 'crime', and in this particular case homicide, is part of an evolving, but distinctly indigenous, tradition.

I sought to portray the complexity of contemporary Tiwi life in putting a whole sequence of events related to the homicide in situational context. In using a processual approach I drew on the legacy of the Manchester School in British social anthropology (Turner and Van Velsen in particular) and its recent developments in the work of Moore. Following Moore I attempted to do justice to heterogeneity and indeterminancy in sociocultural process. Her point to break with 'the normalcy of continuity' was well taken. This implies an ethnographic analysis following in the footsteps of the social actors as events unfold over time, at each point insecure about the future: in line with Moore I considered the time of my fieldwork 'current history'. These events I connected with longer-term historical processes in Tiwi society. Conflict has been studied many times before as a way to detect issues of importance in a certain society that become less manifest in ordinary life. Although I dealt mainly with a case of homicide, the occurences related to the homicide were used as 'diagnostic events' (Moore) that were revealing as to late-twentieth century Tiwi culture.

In explaining the increase in violence in Aboriginal communities as a result of colonisation the *Pax Australiana*, another effect of colonisation, has also to be taken into account. The pre-colonisation levels of violence were high as well, on the basis of what we know (and even if these figures might be somewhat exaggerated). Tight control by mission and government authorities - as far as the newly founded settlements were concerned - and the enforcement of Anglo-Australian law encompassed a pacification, in that killings in retaliation by direct means were outlawed. This did not prevent people from committing homicides by indirect means, the so-called poisonings. The relaxation of immediate intrusion into Aboriginal affairs and the cultural revival (we have seen that the rituals, for instance, were previously suppressed) following this era seemed to be accompanied by a re-emergence of killings by direct means, albeit modified in outward form as

compared to the former Tiwi institution of sneak attacks (*kwampi*). That is not to say that Tiwi society at the end of the 1980s is directly comparable with Tiwi society at the beginning of the century and earlier. In a long-term historical process, numerous changes have taken place (e.g., nominal monogamy, nominal Catholicism, township life, new means of transport and communication, Western commodities and values, processed foods, the emergence of political institutionalisation and social stratification). Encapsulation in the Australian nation-state means that Tiwi people are still subject to Anglo-Australian law (in the present case there was no mention of taking customary laws, whatever they are in this context, into concern). Since 1975 the Australian police has been firmly based on the islands and responsible for maintaining 'law and order', notwithstanding that the two white police officers live somewhat apart from the Tiwi population and many conflicts do not reach their ears. I thus presented the hypothesis that the recent re-emergence of killings by direct means in Tiwi society might be a modern manifestation of the pre-mission sneak attacks (*kwampi*) that went underground in the intermediate period, when killings by indirect means (either poisonings or sorcery) prevailed. In Tiwi society, and seemingly in other Aboriginal societies as well, the majority of conflicts revolved around strife or competition over women. Disagreements concerning men's relationships with women (unbalanced exchange of marriage partners between matriclans, maltreatment, love affairs, suspicions of infidelity, sexual jealousy, wife-snatching, rivalries between men and rivalries between women, and so forth) appeared to be the major source of conflict and violence or of the initial grievance giving rise to violence, grieveous bodily harm and death, that in turn provoked retaliatory violence and killing. In the late-twentieth century context Tiwi people not only had to deal with the homicide but also with the imposed Australian legal system. Outright killings had become an offence according to Anglo-Australian law. This encapsulation in the Australian nation-state placed a strain on Tiwi dealings with these matters.

In this small-scale society, everyone is related to all others by ties of actual or classificatory kinship. These relationships, the identity of the other, cannot be ignored under normal conditions. We have seen that 'not knowing' the other, being blinded by anger or being intoxicated, was a feature of aggressive behaviour, ranging from loudly voiced grievances to assault and death, for which people were seen as less accountable. Without denying its physical effects on the body, it must be noted that the consumption of alcohol set a context for the infliction of violence, as the perpetrators are granted diminished responsibility, instead of being its immediate cause (cf. Brady & Palmer 1984; Myers 1986a). It must be noted that the infliction of physical violence (e.g., a 'good hiding') by people who were certainly not intoxicated also occurred, mostly following an acute moral wrong as perceived by the perpetrators of this violence. McKnight's thesis of an increase of violence as a result of high population and high relational density in massively enlarged Aboriginal settlements seems to be

relevant here (1986). I mentioned Tiwi perceived the township Nguiu, with a population of over 1200, as 'too big', and saw this as the main reason for the high incidence of violence there. A conventional way to avoid an escalation of a conflict or further trouble is to move away (cf. Borsboom 1978: 7). There were residential shifts of people back and forth between the townships on the islands, but dependencies on others in the township, commitments to work, children in local schools, and difficulties in finding suitable housing elsewhere, limited people's mobility, among other factors.

The Tiwi form a so-called hunter-gatherer society. In the chapter on the research setting I sketched the environmental features of the islands, people's ecological knowledge and spiritual attachments to the environment in conjunction with territorial affiliations, and the gender division of labour. The killing of large mobile animals appeared to be a male preserve. Likewise, all the evidence I have suggests that in the past only males committed homicides by direct means (with the exemption of infanticides). The rights to use certain weapons employed in larger killings, such as spears and 'fighting sticks', and guns nowadays, were reserved for the men. (I was told that in the past when knives were scarce, these were kept by the men and only handed to their wives temporarily when they needed a knife.) In different locations in this work the hunter ethos surfaced in the cosmological realm; cooperation of the spirits of the dead in hunting and gathering in the areas where these dead relatives 'lived', the laying-out of spiritual tracks in making identity claims and guiding the spirit of the deceased to the other world, magical acts to ensure the hunter's luck, and the stress on symbolic killings in rites of passage.

I discussed Hart's analysis of 'the struggle for prestige and influence', mainly in marriage politics, among Tiwi living in the bush in 1928-1929 (Hart & Pilling 1960). Sixty years later, despite social transformation and the incorporation of many elements of modern Australian society, Hart's analysis appeared to be still valid: Tiwi individuals were still striving to obtain prestige and influence. While the Roman Catholic mission succeeded in its programme to reform traditional Tiwi society in breaking down gerontocratic polygyny and in decreasing the differences in age between marriage partners (also introducing maidenhood and prolonged widowhood as new social phenomena), the politics of marriage remained an ongoing concern in Tiwi society. The lenghty initiation procedures lost their previous function of keeping Tiwi males from marrying until they were at least in their twenties as a result of the circumstances that young Tiwi women, age mates, could be obtained from the missionaries by men in their late teens. In the past decades only a minority of the men, often already married, underwent initiation. This new type, so-called short-cut, initiation ensured the continuation of the performance of the seasonal yam rituals and proved to be a breeding ground for the ceremonial leadership in the mortuary rituals. Notwithstanding having become nominal Catholics and nominal monogamists, Tiwi people ideally adhered to the practice of an exchange of marriage partners between (exogamous) matriclans (*keramili*).

The animosities that existed between the victim and others show that he was not killed by whimsy. The homicide case in its particularities might be seen as an extraordinary case, but the underlying causes of the conflicts of which death was a tragic result were basic contradictions in Tiwi social organisation:

First, the ideal of an exchange of marriage partners between matriclans was in practice not automatically realised nor could it always be adhered to, as arrangements made in the past carried weight but their actualisation remained a somewhat open-ended process (their accomplishment could stretch over generations) and people were also unevenly distributed over the clans, in age, gender, and number. Furthermore, a single clan often maintained exchange relations with more than one other clan. People's aspirations and claims in the field of marriage politics - which could be justified or unjustified from different points of view - and the unwillingness, hesitation or inability to deliver marriage partners or eventually to give compensation as well as actions that damaged their interests in this respect proved to be a major source of conflict and violence.

Second, brothers ideally had to cooperate and support each other, but at the same time they were competitors for the same category of women, so fraternal generosity coexisted with fraternal strife. Ideally, actual and classificatory brothers ought not to fight, but in practice they frequently did fight over women.

Finally, the system of informal lover relationships, also guided by the preferential rules of marriage, potentially undermined the formally acknowledged pattern of established marriages. Unsanctioned lover relationships and the possible breaking-up of marriages could have far-reaching consequences in that also implicitly the clan members of the individuals concerned tended to become involved because a particular marriage deal was always woven in a web of such arrangements: therefore, the interests in marriage politics, actual and future arrangements, of quite a number of people could be at stake.

Argumentation and conflict in this society centred on what Tiwi, males and females, defined as 'woman problem', 'woman business' or 'woman trouble': shorthand for the whole range of troubles arising from disputed (aspired) relationships of men with women. (These terms are somewhat misleading, for they might erroneously suggest women themselves being the source of trouble, which of course is not necessarily the case.) For Tiwi males the acquisition of wives was an avenue to obtain influence and prestige. Social standing, the worth given to individuals by their consociates, is all-important. It depends on their achievements, and this can be shown in, among other things, marriage politics, reproductive success, foraging, and ritual performances. Success within these contexts enables people to act with more relative autonomy, to put their stamp on social events, to follow their own will, pursue their own interests, and to define reality.

Although Tiwi men have become nominal monogamists they have not given up their aspirations to acquire many wives. For most of the men

described in these pages this was an ongoing concern. They did not actually live with all these women in a single household but the claims were upheld. With some of these potential spouses they could have sexual relationships. Whether a lover would ever become an actual spouse depended on circumstances and particularities. The lover relationships shaped an informal pattern, cross-cutting the pattern of established marriages. Remember the woman who said that every woman must have a husband and a boyfriend. Tiwi females had their own tactics and were scheming as well, although it did not always show when they were pulling the strings.

The point I am driving at is that too many factors are at play to predict people's future actions, as a continuous replication of a neat structure would require. The situational context left choices open to people. I was told by people beforehand, for instance, that they would enact a certain ritual role, but for pragmatic reasons they ended up doing something different, enacting another role with other ends or not participating at all. Likewise I was told beforehand that the names of the killers would be mentioned in the yam ritual, and that 'we will find out' at the time of the final mortuary ritual for the homicide victim. This did not happen. I interpreted the homicide in its situational context, as previous recontextualised events made sense for the victim's opponents in their current conflicts, following on a sequence of events in which it possibly could have been sealed off but in which the conflict instead escalated. It did make sense in the dynamics of Tiwi politics; an individual's goal could never be reached uncompromised.

The importance of the individual in Tiwi politicking, however, is evident. Nothing seemed to be settled once and for all. In their social organisation such a basic social category as the clan (*imunga*) appeared to be amendable by forceful individuals - the alignments of clans changed over time, clans amalgated, and parts of clans split off - but new arrangements were not by necessity acknowledged by all. Currently the countries, which seemed to have become stable with the formation of the Tiwi Land Council, are being renegotiated. The Tiwi kinship system allows for a great deal of flexibility, and permits individuals considerable scope to persue their own interests. Obtaining the compliance of relevant others, however, was a prerequisite. Instead of representing flat characters acting in a fixed and mechanical way, I attempted to do justice to my experience of having become acquainted with real people, many with strong personalities, creatively employing various strategems, calculated as well as spontaneously improvised, in getting along and adjusting to new situations. In the ritual domain in particular, the creative potential of Tiwi people surfaced, stressing and reshuffling social and cosmological identities, thriving on a web of mutual exchange relations, shaping meaning out of a common heritage and reflecting on the cherished uniqueness of the individual.

Conflicts appeared not only to be acted out between individuals but also intrapersonally. Individuals themselves had multiple identities; for instance, the disgruntled brother-in-law and strong opponent of the victim played in another context the role of the victim's widow (dressed in skirts) who

wanted to avenge his death. (I cited the case of a man whose mother defended him against an allegation while he himself made an admission of guilt.) The other part of the matter is that these multiple identities provided people with manifold opportunities open to individual choices.

I made clear that already in the beginning of my fieldwork on Melville and Bathurst Islands I was confronted with rivalries and differences of opinion in Tiwi society. The homicide case became the coordinating narrative framework, an extended case history, enabling me to provide 'thick descriptions' of a number of interrelated aspects of contemporary Tiwi society and culture. After a discussion of Tiwi social organisation and social history I represented the life histories of the later victim and his father. Therewith I tried to connect the particularities in the lives of two individuals and of those associated with them with the changes that took place in Tiwi society from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards. New elements that were incorporated in Tiwi society (such as work, money, township life, and wives to be obtained from the missionaries) shaped their lives and movements. On one hand, the old-style career of the father, Minapini, could be set against the life led by his son Tobias. On the other hand, Tobias suffered from Minapini's banishment from their country too and he was supposed to have inherited his father's character traits. Minapini earned a reputation as a Tiwi killer par excellence mainly as a result of his role in an ambush at Matalau, wherein four brothers were speared to death and a fifth one escaped with a spear in his side. This was one of the last big events in which Tiwi sneak attackers (*kwampi*) operated. In time the killings at Matalau, marking the end of an era, became legendary. The stories about the killings at Matalau contained a lot of information that showed how sneak attacks were organised and demonstrated that this mode of killing was ritualised. Afterwards the events related to the fourfold killing became the subject matter of many songs, dances and other ritual actions. I showed that the repetitive telling of these narratives about the ambush (and ritual performances alluding to it), shortly before Tobias' violent death, could not be divorced from the situational context in which these stories were told. The narrators and many of their audience could relate to these stories about people to whom they were closely related, and whose positions vis-à-vis each other were well-known: they selectively made use of events and characters of the past in their discourse about the current state of affairs. Minapini was continuously portrayed as the culprit, especially by the people with whom his son Tobias had run into conflict. Tobias was said to be like his father. At this point it was uncertain whether Tobias would terminate his affair with Jasmine, an affair a number of people in the township either disapproved of or wanted to take advantage of to promote their own interests in marriage politics. In other words, the narrations had a sociopolitical function in trying to work out an indetermined situation.

I related the machinations of fate in Tobias' life: being expelled from his country, and the tragic deaths of his three wives, two daughters, and his

own brother. He was in deep grief over Marylou, his last wife who had died in a car accident. Tobias' prolonged affair with Jasmine, a woman promised and married to someone else, brought him into serious trouble. I described the various stages in the escalation of the conflict, in the course of which ever more people turned against him. Old grudges and grievances related to histories of disputes and homicides were raised: but again, these had their bearing on the current state of affairs in marriage politics. Despite repeated warnings, Tobias did not undertake the actions that could have defused the mounting crisis.

Then the homicide occured. In the initial reactions of the local Tiwi people and their mourning behaviour we might see 'processes or regularisation'. Various possibilities were offered to explain the cause of Tobias' death, ranging from a ruptured blood vessel to 'tribal punishment' and retaliation for other killings, but no one seemed to be openly blamed. Tiwi people from the township where the killing had taken place refused to talk in two subsequent inquests organised by Tiwi people themselves, and they were also reluctant to speak to the police. The victim's children from the other Tiwi townships, however, wanted to retaliate for their father's death. Over the weekend it had been uncertain whether Tobias indeed had been killed. When the Aboriginal police tracker overheard 'the message' concerning the results of a post-mortem, it was clear that the police detectives would come. The local Tiwi people had to adjust to the altered situation. The intervention of white police, two detectives investigating the homicide, was a *fait accompli* when influential senior relatives from the other island arrived to support Tobias' children and to decide on matters. The decision of where the victim had to be buried was overturned once again. The police investigation heightened the tension but was also welcomed by people with conflicting loyalities. The actions of the detectives did not meet the expectations of a number of Tiwi people, who reckoned they would follow decisive clues such as fingerprints (the equivalent of the Tiwi way of deciphering foot tracks). The Tiwi man who was charged with murder by the police would not have done the deed, according to a majority of Tiwi people in the township. This view was corroborated by a dream of the victim's 'mother'. In a mourning session people who had previously been in conflict with Tobias expressed their solidarity with his bereaved children and stressed their close relationship with them. In a discussion about the nature of violence possibly inflicted I suggested that it seems likely two types of violence, moral and interpersonal violence had been merged: Tiwi people had been robbed of the possibility of executing capital punishment by the imposition of Anglo-Australian law. I advanced the thesis that a culmination of wrongs could outlaw, in Tiwi terms, the wrongdoer: that is, an eventual killing, no matter by whom, was consented to by a group of people.

An analysis of the mortuary rituals showed a further evolution of the social drama in critical reflections on the events leading up to the homicide and on the homicide itself, as well as evaluations of its consequences. The

accomplishment of the rituals involved a lot of politicking and effort on the part of the organisers. Their indebtedness to others could be of long duration (as the aftermath showed). Taking part in a ritual or not could be a political move, and some of the people blamed for the homicide did not appear. Execution of a punishment of alleged killers, as was intended to take place during one ritual after the other, did not occur: there was uncertainty, the killer(s) did not 'come out', time was needed to 'find out' and reach an agreement about who was to blame (the performance of one yam ritual and the final postfuneral rituals for Tobias were postponed), white police were present, the alleged killers absent or able to side step the issue, and so on. Perhaps the threat of physical violence, and the suggestion that it was backed up spiritually, was sufficient; it had influenced people's behaviour. Viewing the sequence of rituals, and especially the messages ritual performances, and song texts in particular, contained, it must be clear that these Tiwi rituals were embedded in an ongoing social process.

The competitiveness within Tiwi society, evident in the incidence of violence and in marriage politics, is also a feature of ritual. The centrality of death-related behaviour in Tiwi cultural action, I believe, relates to the need for recurrent negotiation of social relationships. People have to live with uncertainty about the future; things cannot be put on hold, life goes on and new situations arise. A death is an emergent new situation, a loss and an occasion that provides opportunities at the same time. Following a death the social fabric has to be restored (cf. Metcalf & Huntington 1991; Bloch & Parry 1982); things can never be quite the same anymore. In the ritual context, people can safely express their grief and a great many other things, as we have seen. Individuals are forced to make choices and the audience (of the living as well as the dead) bears testimony to their stand. We have seen that in this limbo context all sorts of relationships were stressed. In Tiwi eschatology the spirits of the deceased 'follow' their fathers and father's fathers. In the ritual drama the frame narrative is that of guiding the spirit of the deceased from the world of the living to the world of the dead. The participants enact ritual roles indicated by a special mortuary kinship terminology. These various roles are enacted in a certain sequence in the dance and song ceremony (*yoi*). In this sequence of performances the new spirit of the dead is constituted. Each category of personnel, enacting a particular role through conventional metaphors, contributes a part to the whole. At the same time, reflections on personal experiences relating to the deceased can be woven into these performances. The song texts are often dialogues of the performer with the spirit of the deceased and simultaneously directed at the audience. These more personal narratives within the larger framework might be seen as reflections on the performer from the perspective of the deceased. In disconnecting or distancing the deceased from the self, as it were (e.g., the bereaved sibling who loses one side of the face or a leg, symbolically representing the deceased), a relative autonomy is realised. The voice of the deceased can be employed as a rhetorical device. Mortuary rituals are avenues to obtaining prestige and

influence. People who act as ritual workers are supposed to commission their employers as ritual workers when the situation is reversed. These mortuary exchange relations follow the same lines as those in the exchange of marriage partners.

Important also was that in ritual action new meaning could be given to previous events. Especially an act of killing tended to become recontextualised to mark significant ritual transitions. The allusions to the former killings in turn could be meaningful - could carry a hidden message - in relation to the current affairs in which performers and audience were involved as social actors.

The requirement that Tiwi singers compose entirely new songs for every occasion (unless there is a good reason to cite an old one) is in contrast to the rather fixed composition of song texts as reported from various parts of Arnhem Land (cf. Berndt 1950; see Berndt & Berndt 1988 for further references). Striking also is the emphasis on individual creativity and orginality in Tiwi song composition, and that the creative powers are attributed to human beings ('good songwriters') instead of the beings of the Dreamtime (cf. Maddock 1986; Clunies Ross 1987). In Tiwi mortuary rituals in general there happened to be a strong emphasis in focus on deceased patrilineal relatives, such as actual and classificatory fathers and father's fathers. Tiwi people said they 'follow' them and did not mention totemic beings of the Dreamtime to me in this context, although the dreamings, as we have seen, were also important.

The rituals appeared be an arena in which skilled performers competed. These rituals were instances of 'trouble'. I referred to the concept of *ngirramini*, translated for me as 'talk, story, argument, word, meeting'. The arguments running through song texts, which were especially composed for the occasion, gave insight into what mattered to Tiwi from different points of view, besides showing their creativity. The later homicide victim spoke of the performance of songs as 'fight with words'. This thesis is biased in the sense that senior people, the 'big-headed' or 'good songwriters' in particular, are overrepresented. Not many people participated in the seasonal yam ritual (*kulama*) but its performance was still considered meaningful. I see it as an attempt to counteract the negative sides of life - including conflict and violence, and sickness and death. It was literally stated that the yam ritual had 'to stop people from fighting'. It seems the ritualists tried to master the problems undermining their well-being. For the senior and able men it was a preferable way to settle their disputes, I believe, while the competitive young men, in the past, could take action in the form of physical violence (e.g., in sneak attacks) to gain their objectives and deter competitors. Like sexual relationships and abductions of women, these violent actions could undermine the hegemony of the gerontocrats (there are a number of historical cases of older polygynists being killed by younger men in order to obtain their wives, whereas the really successful polygynist was more likely to be a peacemaker, *pongkini*). The senior men, of course, also had the power to inflict violence and to organise raids and battles (in

which younger men could show their prowess as fighters) when their rights were infringed upon, but it seems to me this was more likely moral or juridical violence (e.g., the spear-throwing duel). Jurisdiction, so to speak, depended on the support of aggregates of individuals. What was considered a justified action by the inflictors of violence could become an offence to others. We have seen this in the homicide case.

In describing how the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system dealt with the homicide, I have shown false the assumption on the basis of Western common sense that no one will confess to a crime one did not commit. I examined how such a confession of murder in a record of interview with the police came into being and tried to demonstrate that too much weight was put on it. In following the court proceedings I juxtaposed Western notions of the homicide with Tiwi perceptions and interpretations. Aboriginal expertise happened not to be acknowledged as evidence in defence of the accused in the murder trial.

I tried to represent multiple voices of Tiwi people most involved over time in relation to the case. These were indicative of cultural possibilities in dealing with the matters at hand. I described the period of my fieldwork as current history, added my wife and myself as social actors, and in the processual analysis of the case had to incorporate uncertainty about the future of the Tiwi actors. The homicide case, unsolved by the Anglo-Australian criminal justice system, was by no means a clear-cut case for the Tiwi people involved, as follows from the multiple views and the different targets of blame that illustrated Tiwi perspectives in their situational contexts over time.

Although the data revealed 'woman trouble' as a likely cultural possibility in motivating the homicide, I want to stress that it must be seen as only a possibility. To my argument and in Tiwi views over time there was no single and definite solution. As I said at the outset, my aim has been to understand Tiwi 'culture'. I presented the homicide case in order to establish that Tiwi 'culture' cannot be seen as a coherent whole. The many song texts, thick descriptions of Tiwi rituals, their innovations, and so forth are evidence of the orginality and creativity so valued by Tiwi people and demonstrate the vitality and dynamism of Tiwi cultural action. A long narrative was needed to explain the complexity of contemporary Tiwi culture that pervades in all their modes of action.

What I learned.from Tiwi people is that there is no such thing as an instant recipe to deal with what happens tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, but there is a way - let us call this culture - in which matters are dealt with: an approach. Whatever happens in life we have to live on, being the people we are.

NOTES

Chapter 1

[1] Besides incompleteness, the presentation of statistics would be misleading because many grievances were linked to others and hard to distinguish (cf. Williams 1987: 67-8). A single dispute could go on for several months, involving many people and leading to a series of conflicts and fights between various antagonists. Another complicating factor is that although I learned about many conflicts and saw the physical results of numerous fights, it was considered inappropriate to show too great an interest in other people's 'business'. I refrained from unnecessarily prying into other people's lives when they choose not to publicise the events themselves. What I reveal here is only information that at some point was made public for all to know in the community.

[2] I recorded two cases of a Tiwi woman stabbing her husband to death. The first homicide occurred in December 1974; the second, a white man being the victim, occurred in February 1988. With regard to the 1974 case I was told the husband to his wife's dismay had affairs with other women. In the latter case, according to my informants, the woman had been frequently assaulted. In November 1989, in another case of homicide, a man stabbed his wife to death after she had threatened to leave him.

[3] 'Brothers' here means classificatory brothers. I will use the following conventional abbreviations to indicate a kin relationship: M = mother; F = father; D = daughter; S = son; Z = sister; B = brother; W = wife; H = husband.

[4] See about the understanding of ritual Lewis (1980) and Gerholm (1988).

[5] See also Werbner (1984) and Vincent (1986).

[6] A social situation, as Garbett puts it, 'is a temporally and spatially bounded series of events abstracted by the observer from the on-going flow of social life' (1970: 215).

[7] Hart's work is clearly influenced by Malinowski (cf. Hart, Pilling & Goodale 1988: viii-ix). His study of Tiwi marriage politics at the end of the 1920s (Hart & Pilling 1960: ch. 3) takes into concern both individual interests and how people are tied to arrangements that have been made in the past. In attempting to actualise their aspirations and political goals, the actors are neither completely free from the configurations that have developed over time and the arena in which they operate, nor are they tightly constrained by what might be loosely formulated as the rules and laws of their society. Hart demonstrates that Tiwi people engaged in politics may exploit their opportunities through various tactics, depending on their position, political 'assets', abilities and personalities. His work on the Tiwi still stands as one of the best studies on politics in a so-called hunter-gatherer society.

[8] See also Kuper's 'The Invention of Primitive Society' (1988) for the relevance of Malinowski's critique on what Kuper calls the illusion of primitive society.

[9] See also Burridge (1973), Marcus & Cushman (1982), Marcus & Fisher (1986), Clifford & Marcus (1986), and Myers (1986b, 1988b).

Chapter 2

[10] See Osborne (1974: 51) for a discussion of gender in the Tiwi language. In relation to Goodale's hypothesis it is interesting to note that, according to Osborne, 'Parts of the body are of the same gender as their possessor, except for the genital organs, which are invariably of the opposite gender to the possessor' (ibid.). I was frequently told that Tiwi men 'hunt' for women in the mangroves. One woman who had offered herself as a wife to a senior man who had organized the mortuary rituals for her brother was said by this senior man to have

given him her gential organs exclusively, discarding all rights of other men. Hence, she was his exclusive wife (*nyaka*).

11 See Rigsby & Sutton (1982) for a discussion of the management of land and people in an Aboriginal society.

12 For a review see R. Berndt (1960).

13 Hiatt wonders, however, how in terms of reproductive advantage age can be explained in gerontocratic polygyny 'as a basis for solidarity' among distantly-related senior men (1985: 44). Hart stresses senior Tiwi men acted in solidarity against their juniors, who threatened the interests of the gerontocracy (Hart & Pilling 1960: 82, 95, passim). The impression I get from Tiwi genealogies is that they were not that distantly related, but this is a point that needs further consideration and accurate statistical data (cf. Hiat 1985).

14 The term *imunga* has multiple meanings: breath, sun, noon, time, clan ancestress (also *intula*, 'the old woman'), the locality where the mythical clan ancestress 'stopped' or dwells, and environmental features or species associated with the clan. Synonyms are *wanaringa* (sun, our mother) and *pukwi* (sun).

15 Jerome considered these two clans as somewhat incestuous, he referred to a popular myth of the frill-necked lizard (*kuripurani*) who seduced his sister the black cockatoo (*ngaringa*) (see Osborne 1974: 90-2) and said the people of these clans likewise 'humbug one another', 'still doing it today'.

16 The ideal thus is a unilateral cross-cousin marriage, an asymmetrical pattern, in contrast to the Kariera system in which there is no such formal distinction between 'mother's brother's daughter' and 'father's sister's daughter' (to whom a single term is applied), and the preferential marriages are symmetrical bilateral cross-cousin marriages (Brandl 1971: 171). For a discussion of further contrasts to the Kariera system, see Hart & Pilling (1960: 27) and Brandl (1971: chapter 3).

17 I use 'senior' as an indication of a social status that comes with age but does not necessarily directly correlate to age. It is in accordance with local understanding, although in English Tiwi speak of 'old man' or 'old people'. Tiwi women, for instance, speak of their husband with a status of seniority as 'my old man' no matter that they are age mates.

18 Songs about women in the yam ritual being called *impurkuruwalla* and in the mortuary rituals *inuruwanga* or *pagguwanga*.

19 It follows from Hart's fieldnotes (1928/29) that he knew about what Goodale has called the type A marriage contract.

20 The female spear, *arawuningkiri*, contrasts to a male one-sided one, *tungkwaliti*. One of these barbed spears was shown to a man after his wife had given birth and indicated the sex of his newborn child.

21 The female spear,*arawuningkiri*, contrasts to a male one-sided one, *tungkwaliti*. One of these barbed spears was shown to a man after his wife had given birth and indicated the sex of his newborn child.

22 A type A4 might be added in which an elder brother shares a wife with a younger brother.

23 Jerome, for example, nearly sixty years old, had a mother-in-law of twelve, a marriage deal following on that her father had obtained his father's brother's sister's daughter (*amoa*). And Mike, a bachelor approaching his thirties, had an affair with a widow in her late fifties, regarded the six-year-old daughter of his mother-in-law as his wife, expected to acquire a young widow of his classificatory brother, and in the mean time hoped to get a sister of his brother-in-law (in which he succeeded).

24 Tiwi have also a vocabulary for feelings about human features, physical features, like how persons hold their hands and clap, how they walk, and so forth.

25 In June1636, the crew of two damaged Dutch ships explored the north coast of Melville Island, not being aware it was an island, and named it Van Diemensland (after the governor general of the Dutch East India Company, founded in 1602). They saw fires and smoke in many places inland, but no people or vessels (Robert 1973: 117-25). It might be inferred that the smoke resulted from grass-burning by the islanders, for in June it was dry season.

In 1705, the Dutch East India Company sent three ships for a further survey, to begin at the Van Diemensland mentioned, on and along the coast of Hollandia Novia (ibid.: 134-7). On April 23, members of the crew encountered about fourteen or fifteen Aboriginal men (at the beach of Karlslake in the central north of Melville Island), who 'seeing that our men could not be induced by their grimaces, signs, gestures, yelling and display of assagais and hand-cudgels etc., to retreat from the shore, were imprudent enough to throw some of the said assagais or better sharpened sticks at our men, so as to injure and intimidate them, who after that with a single flintlock one of their chiefs, or one who appeared to be so, hit with a ball, the rest began to run away, being very agile and of well-made posture; but the wives are tall and thin, with very broad mouths and small eyes, the hair of both is woolly, like that of the inhabitants of the Papuan islands, and a yellow or red ointment, prepared with turtle-fat, seems their ornament' (ibid.: 138-41). The description closely resembles the driving out of the spirits of the dead (*mopadruwi*), an episode in Tiwi mortuary ritual. There was another incident when eight islanders injured two white sailors in an attempt to get their clothes, 'after having conversed with these people for weeks, eaten and drunk, been aboard, examining all things in admiration, having received presents and on their part had regaled our men with fish and crabs.' It was noted they 'appeared very greedy after linen, knives, beads and such knick-knacks, but possess nothing which is of value' (ibid.: 140-1). At night, mid-June, a master of one of the ships spied an encampment of about 500 people two miles inland. The skipper Marten van Delft, in command of the expedition, disapproved of his plans to kidnap two or three men and bring them to Batavia. This was in line with his instructions, which told him he had to have these people's full consent, which could not be achieved as long as the sailors did not understand the language. In the report to the governor general in Batavia, on the basis of the explorer's notes that seem to have been lost, it is stressed that 'nothing was seen which has any value', no minerals or metal, and hardly any trees 'of an aromatic or spicy kind', only the soil seemed 'fertile, if cultivated' (ibid.: 140-3; Swaardecroon & Chastelijn 1856). The islanders appeared to be of little interest as trading partners to the Dutch in the East Indies.

[26] According to Cense there is no evidence that the 'Macassans' came to the Australian north coast earlier than the last quarter of the eigtheenth century (1950: 252). In 1803, the British explorer Flinders obtained information from a man named Pobassoo, who was in command of six praus (belonging to a fleet of sixty) he encountered near the Australian coast, that they had come to Australian waters only about twenty years earlier, which was later confirmed at Timor (Cense 1950: 250; Flinders 1814: 228-33, 257; Warner also cites Flinders, 1958: 454-6 fn. 6-7). Cense remarks that Warner tends to date the interaction between the Macassans and Aborigines much earlier than follows from Flinder's account (1950: 256-7 fn. 26). Berndt & Berndt write these contacts date 'possibly as far back as the fifteenth century' (1988: 17), and Hiatt states, 'Probably Indonesians visited the Arnhem Land coast from the sixteenth century onwards' (1965: 5). The Berndts say that older Aboriginal people insisted there were earlier contacts with other people from the Indonesian archipelago other than the Macassans, but the distinction remains obscure, and the authors state that 'perhaps in the early part of the sixteenth century, "Macassan" (Indonesian) contact of a more easily identifiable sort began' (1988: 18-19).

[27] European fishermen began to compete with Asian trepangers (fishers collecting sea-slugs) in the second half of the nineteenth century. Aborigines, however, appeared to prefer to continue to work for the latter. In the 1880s, the white administration began to collect taxes from the crews of visiting ships. Finally, as a result of the pressure exerted by their European competitors, the Asian trepangers were offically banned from Australian waters in 1907 (Cense 1950: 255; Hiatt 1965: 5).

[28] Encounters with the islanders occurred in May. King notes 'they repeatedly asked for axes by imitation of the action of chopping' (1827[1]: 111, 121). These are nowadays dance movements in the so-called axe-giving, a small ritual that initiates the postfuneral rituals (see chapter 8). The islanders offered the white sailors a basket with fresh water and a basket with mashed cycad palm fruits (*kwoka*, the wet season staple food) and were given a few chisels and files and two tomahawks in return (King 1827[1]: 109-115). The sailors did not dare to go ashore because, in the words of King, 'the natives had their spears close at hand,

for those who were in the water had them floating near them, and those who were on the beach had them either buried in the sand, or carried them between their toes in order to deceive us and to appear unarmed' (ibid.: 114-15). In another encounter the islanders appeared to ask for axes as well, a musket was fired over their heads to keep them at bay (ibid. 119-121). It seems from King's account that the islanders were used to approaching alien sailors from whom they could obtain steel blade axes to replace the local stone ones.

29 It would still take a century, however, before the islands were opened up for mining interests. In December 1991, an agreement was signed with Renison Goldfields Consilidated by the Tiwi Land Council to explore and eventually mine the beaches of the islands for mineral sands (see *The Bulletin*, 25.2.1992).

30 In 1877, the leader of the surveying party was severely injured by a Tiwi spear on Melville Island. Another member of this party noted, 'It is evident that the natives regard the landing of white men on Melville Island as an invasion and they are determined to murder all who venture on what they consider their territory' (Hingston 1938: 163). In 1905, another governmental expedition to Melville Island conceived of the danger of 'the thickly-wooded country being infested with treacherous and bloodthirsty savages' (Brown 1906: 23). One member of this expedition, the anthropologist Basedow, would return as chief inspector of the Aborigines in the Northern Territory in 1911. He stated, 'Their isolation and, no doubt in a measure also, their reputation as being cannibalistic and treacherous in their habits, have guarded their primitive condition to the present day' (1913: 291). Sowden, a journalist who visited the Northern Territory with representatives of the South Australian parliament in 1882, reports about the islands that 'they are absolutely unproductive bits of South Australian territory, supporting no one but the swarming tribes of blacks. The hostile Melville Islanders had better make the most of their opportunities; ere long we shall have begun to civilize them. If, by-the-way, there is a missionary to spare in South Australia or elsewhere, here is a good opening for him' (1882: 21-2).

31 Gsell states, 'In a word, they had to be taught to be planters and, incidentically, this was in harmony with the desire of the Government who wanted to see an attempt to raise the natives to this level' (1956: 111). In 1888, Catholic missionaries of the Jesuit order unsuccessfully attempted to be granted Melville or Bathurst Island. They hoped to found a mission, a self-supporting agricultural community to their Paruguayan model, in a place where the Aborigines would be segregated from the evil outside world (Reid 1990: 136-7). Gsell, a Catholic priest of the order of the Mission of the Sacred Heart, inspired by the work and ideas of the Jesuits, managed to be granted land in the southeast of Bathurst Island for a mission and having declared the rest of the island an Aboriginal reserve by the South Australian government in 1910. Gsell's plans were approved of by the Federal Australian government that had taken over the Northern Territory from South Australia in 1911 (Gsell 1956: 40-3; Reid 1990: 140).

32 Pilling did his fieldwork at the Bathurst Island Mission a few years later (in 1954). He states, 'In fact, I found that the Islanders, in contrast to people in other societies, apparently did not believe that a deceased person had a spirit' (1958: 19). I cannot but disagree.

33 In the Bathurst Island Mission archives in Nguiu I found certificates marked with Tiwi people's fingerprints in ink and signed by the mission superintendent. It shows the policy of the mission at that time. The first text is from 1969: 'This is to say that [name of a woman] is FREE to marry the boy of her choice, according to God's law and the law of His Church.' The second one is from 1968: 'RE. DEATH AND BURIAL OF [NAME OF THE DECEASED]. This is to certify that we, the undersigned, want a Catholic Burial for [NAME]. We do not want any pagan-type of funeral dance -PUKAMANI, etc- to take place after we bury [NAME]. He was baptised a Catholic and died one. We will have Mass and prayers said for him.'

Chapter 3

34 See Hart (1974) for a vivid description of the seizure of initiates. The type of cicatrices I mention were adopted by Tiwi from mainland Aborigines in the beginning of the twentieth century. The scars (*minga*) were made with the sharp edge of a mussel shell, a piece of glass

or a razor blade. For Tiwi this hostile act seems to have been associated with the cutting of the shark's dorsal fin (also called *minga*) through the water surface, a conventional sign of aggression. The shark dance, depicting this movement of the shark, is performed by brothers-in-law of the deceased in mortuary ritual.

35 As this would have been in 1971 or thereabouts I was unable to find out this either: the police station in Garden Point was founded in 1975, and the criminal records of the police in Darwin had been (partially) destroyed by cyclone Tracy in 1974. One might wonder if Tobias would have been employed as a police tracker a few years later if he had had a criminal record, perhaps still within memory of Darwinite police officers.

36 In the years 1987-1989, for instance, at least seven people died when the cars they were driving or riding in rolled over; in all cases, the driver had been intoxicated. (This must be added to the death toll in boating accidents, mostly in dinghies with outboard motors being overloaded and further destabilised by drunken passengers.)

37 Simon, Nancy, Isaac, Jerome, Ella, Bruce, Theodore, Roger, Mildred, Bill, Dimitri, and Mabel.

38 The area was populated when seen by the Dutch in 1636 and 1705, and by the British in 1818 (for references see chapter 2).

39 One informant explained: 'They always painted all in red after that fight. That mean they got them properly [they killed them].' The homicides were considered justified. The use of red ochre is a multivocal colour symbolism. It is associated with blood, danger, and mourning (cf. chapter 6). When men paint their bodies with red ochres, for example during the first night of the yam ritual, it depicts them as sneak attackers (*kwampi*). In addition, red ochre (*jaringa*) identified Minapini, the main culprit in the accounts at the end of the 1980s, as it is closely associated with his country Tikelaru, where it can be found (cf. Berndt 1950: 295).

40 Nancy commented: 'He [Kantilla] didn't throw good. And he Minapini, he throwing good. He shot man one time, kill him die.'

41 Ritchie, a lay missionary, describes in great detail the rather rude way in which he, accompanied by a policeman (the one who later founded the government ration depot at Garden Point) and a medical doctor, kidnapped the old man (1934: 70-7). (The deportation of lepers was part of the government policy meant to limit the spread of the disease, considered contagious, among the Aborigines living in reserves.) The policeman fired a shot and Ritchie 'told them that unless they brought the old man along, the policeman would take them to Darwin and put them in Fanny Bay - the jail for blacks' (ibid.: 76).

42 Pilling, however, states they went home immediately because they feared being killed by the people of the country where the ambush had been taken place. Pilling notes that no matter the killings being justified 'there is a danger of an outbreak of violence' (1958:329).

43 This account is based on information provided by Bruce Kerimerini, Jerome Pamantari, and Ryan Munuluka. For other accounts of this myth, see Allen (1976: 197-202) and Mountford (1958: 26-7).

44 The version recorded by Goodale (1971: 177-9) is presented in this way.

45 As Macdonald points out in relation to a Wiradjuri fight story: 'In the fight, as in the fight story, there is a transformation of the basic themes which can be discerned in social relations generally. The fight becomes the anecdotical expression of life, the ordering of reality into one symbolic event which expresses the various tensions, oppositions, contradictions and values with which people live day by day. These are relived in the stories which thus take a timeless quality' (1988: 180).

46 For an extensive discussion of the marriage politics in Malau at the end of the 1920s, see Hart & Pilling (1960: chapter 3).

47 In the 1950s Summit was the leader of a semi-nomadic bush camp that consisted of approximately 150 people (Pilling 1976: 13). Summit died in 1969. At the time of his death he had seven wives living with him (cf. Brandl 1971).

48 Thomas recited a song of sorrow made by his father Minapini in which he expressed he felt sorry for his country: 'Poor country, my uncle kicked me out./[I am] very sorry for my

country./I will be here no more/I have only been here to foot./I miss it [my country]./I have only been here to look./My uncle [said]; 'go!'; 'Poor my country./I am really sorry, my land./I came here to look./I am sorry, my own land.' Thomas himself composed the following song about this event: 'Look son, [the uncle said,] you got to go back./I don't want this son, [he said,] I don't want you, you go!' After Thomas' death, a leader of the people from Tikelaru composed a grievance song in his seasonal yamritual saying he had never denied Thomas access to a certain part of his country (see chapter 6). Hart (1970) reports that the people from the district Tangio in Tikelaru did not allow people from elsewhere, even Tikelaru, on their land.

49 Brandl reports about this man that, in 1969, he 'is oriented more than most men of his age [he was about 43 years old then] to traditional ways. He has not accepted monogamy and engages frequently in negotiations for wives' (1971: 307).

Chapter 4

50 The location of the dead body later would become an issue in the murder trial in the Supreme Court. The angle from which the coroner had taken his photographs of where the corpse was situated distorted a proper view on its position. Given the lack of actual measurements and technically more telling photographs it was accepted by the court that the dead body had been laying closer to Thomas' hut than to the hut of Isaac, a position favourable to the Crown's case. According to my rough measurements I took in situ, however, the corpse had been laying about nine steps away from the verandah of Thomas' hut but only about three steps from the verandah of Isaac's hut.

51 Jerome had the story from hearsay. He lived somewhere else at the time it happened. In the quarrel at the beer canteen Jerome accused Tobias of having speared his brother in his side. Jacob, however, had been speared in his back.

52 'They had a fight' was a standard expression taken from the myth of Purukupali and Tapara (who seduced Purukupali's wife) in which the two brothers fought. Jerome was particularly fond of this myth. He often made allusions to it in his mourning songs.

53 Alan and Mildred, both senior health workers, were council members. This in part explains Alan's stress on a medical explanation of Tobias' death no matter foul play was more likely as an explanation. Mildred often complained about the conflicting roles (Anglo-Australian health worker and Tiwi woman) she had to perform. In the context of her work at the health clinic she had to put aside Tiwi cultural imperatives, such as avoiding her classificatory brother Alan, whereas in other situational contexts she had to behave as a Tiwi woman. She experienced considerable difficulty in slipping into the Westernised role of a health worker continuously. 'Culture is a feeling inside', she said. As the health worker in charge, Mildred in practice often refrained from communicating with her 'brother' directly. This often caused her problems.

54 As far as I know, there is no word for 'hate' in Tiwi.

55 Tobias faced in that direction too. It must be noted that at the time most people were not aware that Tobias had a fatal stab wound in his chest. The pathologist who inspected the body did not discover this wound. It first became clear to him during the post-mortem he performed in Darwin.

56 Bill's father had been given Tobias, before Tobias was born, as his 'promise' by Minapini. The baby Tobias turned out to be a male and therefore did not actually become Bill's father's wife.

57 In the Pularumpi police station files the following case is recorded: In April 1976, the later victim became involved in an argument with a clan brother of Tobias after he had tried in the evening 'to grab hold of an Aboriginal female' and 'received a blow to the head with a strip of masonite'. He 'remained the night sleeping on the ground near a mango tree in the Old Camp, in the vicinity of where the altercation took place'. The next day he was found dead.

58 Under the corrugated iron was the grave of Tobias' last wife's dog. He had put this dog to death because the animal reminded him too much of his beloved late wife. It also assured

him, and maybe comforted him, that her spirit was accompanied by her favorite hunting dog.

59 See Sansom (1980: 30-4) and Langton (1988) for the social significance of swearing to make the style of speaking 'unwhite'.

60 With the anniversary of the death of her baby Jasmine asked me to buy toys for my 'brother'. These toys she brought to her little son's grave.

61 This might have been a reason Nancy, Simon and Jerome thought the iron bar at the scene of the killing was probably the weapon used.

62 This resembles the obtaining of an admission or the 'true story' described by Williams for the Yolngu of northeast Arnhem Land (1987: 93-4). In the previous chapter we have seen that in the past Tiwi sneak attackers admitted a killing by painting their bodies with white clay and pulling out their beards. Furthermore, Milewuri took his sons aside and asked them to tell him the 'truth' in line with the procedure I here refer to (section 3.3.). Later on, in chapter 6, I will discuss the yam ritual as another context in which an offender could make such an admission, although in public, in front of the audience present.

63 See Maddock (1988) for a discussion of a distinction between non-binding norms (e.g., in marriage disputes) and binding norms (e.g., related to incestuous relationships and sacrilege). He calls the violation of these norms private wrongs and public wrongs respectively. I would like to suggest that the cumulative violation of non-binding norms can turn the private wrongs into a public wrong and make the norm binding. With reference to instances of the violation of binding norms Maddock elsewhere writes 'that a man who had clearly broken a norm could not count on people who might have supported him were the case doubtful or ambiguous. (...) The offender would find himself opposed to a consensus in the local community and might have to flee for his life' (1986: 55).

64 I was given the Tiwi term *kiritjilti* for someone who gets angry or is feeling angry. This term is also applied to food when it has a bad taste and to bad water (not dirty water in particular).

65 Although a woman in 1989 and a man in 1990 were stabbed to death, and the fatal wounds were on two other locations on the body indicating relationships.

66 I have described above that some people, although closely related to the deceased, did not mourn and took a passive attitude. Emotions are 'an index of social relationship' (Lutz 1988: 4). In Tiwi symbolic action the reverse might also be true. The silences, withdrawal of support, and lack of emotional behaviour denied a relationship to the deceased. In this case it seems likely to me that the people of Tobias' clan (Sam, Isaac) were in a state of shock, like Tobias' daughter Laura. Sam later explained to me that he did not understand how this could have happened to him.

67 That the cause of Tobias' death had been a stab wound to the chest Kevin might also have read about in the newspaper that came in the morning prior to his so-called confession. It had been published in the 'police briefings' in the *Northern Territory News* (November 1, 1988).

Chapter 5

68 In the descriptions I will use the past tense because my fieldwork was in the (recent) past. It should not be inferred that what I decribe on basis of my data has ceased to exist. I merely describe events that I observed in 1988-1989 (and 1991).

69 For a review of the extensive ethnographic literature on Tiwi mortuary rituals I refer to Brandl (1971: 344-404) and Grau (1983: 78-108).

70 My informants, contradicting Goodale (1971: 255), asserted that the term *pukamani* in this sense also applied to the *kulama*.. The violators of a taboo become *pukamani* themselves and the same applies to food carried through a ceremonial ground.

71 As one such relatively rare event happened to occur during the time of my fieldwork I will summarise the cleansing rituals for a 'country' following this person's death. In 1989, an elderly woman who was the most senior person of the 'country' or district Imalu (in the

northwest of Melville Island) died. Thereafter the complete 'country' and adjacent sea became taboo. I was told all the greenback turtles (her dreaming), fish, and animals on the land had moved away not allowing themselves to be caught (hunting and fishing were forbidden anyway). A special cleansing rite for the 'country' was performed at two significant places. After an elaborate cleansing rite with smoke and a series of dances and songs in the bush camp where the deceased had recently stayed, people went to the beach in front of a reef where turtles were usually harpooned. There an elaborate turtle dance was performed, concluding with a ritual washing in the sea strait. A half-brother of the deceased, while 'marking' a turtle, swam a long way into the sea. Thereafter people went further north to a cliff with the open sea in view. Lifting one hand some men called out significant names of places along the shore in this 'country'. One of the performers explained to me it was done to tell the turtles and fish to come back. The first turtle harpooned hereafter was brought onto the beach in Garden Point. The dead woman's half-brother had to cut it. He and other patrilineal relatives of the turtle dreaming performed a small turtle dance on the beach but were not allowed to eat from this first turtle's meat. The widower, who participated in the cleansing rituals, told me he would not go hunting in this 'country' until the rain (*pakatringa*) during the next wet season had washed all *pukamani* away. It was safe for other people, he said, but not for him. He also strictly observed the *pukamani* rules regarding himself.

72 The Aboriginal health workers complained to me that the designers of the well-equipped health clinic, containing a morgue, had given little thought to the possibility that once people had died there others would be frightened to enter the clinic to receive medical care. Though every time someone had died in the health clinic (three times during my stay) the building was ritually cleansed inside with smoke, this did not take away the fear of a number of people, especially close relatives of the deceased, regarding the spirits of the dead. Some people refused to go into the building at all, and others were reluctant to stay there for the night even when necessary for medical reasons. Some health workers said they were frightened themselves at times.

73 I was told that in the past the deceased were wrapped in a large piece of bark, tied with a long string, previously used to sleep on. The foottracks of the deceased would be wiped out, except in the mangrove swamps where the tide would wash them away.

74 See also Grau's study of Tiwi dance (1983). She gives the choreographies of the dances below in so-called benesh movement notation. Whereas Grau, as a choreographer, was more interested in a typology of the dances and dance as such within the cultural context, I will elaborate on its dramatic aspects in mortuary ritual.

75 See Merlan (1988) for a good discussion of gender relationships in Aboriginal societies.

76 It must be noted that the 'workers' might be close relatives of the deceased as well, perceived kinship ought not to be confused with genealogical links here. Tiwi, for instance, can marry their paternal half-siblings, albeit these spouses have to be of another marriageable clan. Therefore, in theory, a half-sister or half-brother of the deceased, siblings of the deceased's spouse, might act as a ritual worker (*ambaru*). It is more likely, however, that such a person takes up the role of *mutuni*.

77 In September 1989, there was a big row at Pularumpi about where a dead man had to be buried, in the course of which the coffin with the corpse had to be locked up in a police cell overnight. Influential brothers of the deceased from Nguiu wanted to have him buried there. At first the widow agreed but then she changed her mind. A meeting was held at Pularumpi. People, several painted up with white clay and carrying clubs, gathered around a circular space. The brothers bluntly accused the widow of being responsible for her husband's death. Her mother spoke up for her, clapping her hands, stamping her feet, and yelling, 'She is the Queen.' The widow had a veto over all major decisions concerning the mortuary rituals. The brothers from Nguiu said they would not come to the funeral if the deceased were buried at Pularumpi. The brothers from Melville Island supported the widow. She decided for Pularumpi, whereupon the elder brothers went away. The man who had sired the deceased, a classificatory father, went to them and hit himself forcefully with a club on his head. The brothers from Nguiu did not show up at the funeral. It was important for them

to have their brother buried at Nguiu because it would give them and their descendants rights in the area of the township.

78 Pularumpi appeared to be a stronghold of these people who frequently had to take ceremonial leadership roles in the other townships.

79 All over the world there is a connection between percussion and transition (Needham 1967). The rhythm of stamping the ground and beating the human flesh or iron were part of the death rites as *rites de passage*. The great noise contrasted with the usual silence and marked the transition of the deceased from the living to the dead. Huntington & Metcalf speak of 'a purposeful noisiness' (1979: 46, 46-50).

80 Between the performances of different bereavement status there would be a small break to give everyone of a particular category of bereaved the opportunity to dance. Nevertheless, now and than people stirred up a fight claiming they had not been given the opportunity to dance or had not been asked to do so. Often there was also a row when certain people refused to dance. People who arrived too late, depending on their social position and relationship with the deaceased, would complain and argue they had to be waited for. The people arriving when the dancing was on waited until the particular performance had ended and then went to the corpse (or bereaved close relatives of the deceased) to wail and hit themselves.

81 The widow sang: (Dead man saying) 'Oh, you sweat?/You're all wet under your pants!/Are your private parts wide or little?'

82 He sang: (Dead woman saying) 'Don't burn off the whole lot [pubic hair], because your [second] wife might growl at you.'

83 Simon told me how he 'used to go wild' in the past and cut with a large knife in his forehead. I was told it was not done anymore because someone had died in head-cutting. This aspect of mourning behaviour has changed since the 1950s (see Mountford 1958; Goodale 1971).

84 Both types of burning clothes terminated a relationship. The ritual burning of clothes of the deceased (called *amprakatika*) was, however, perceived as different from the burning of clothes of a spouse or lover (called *tupilipiami*) to 'finish' the relationship with that person. The ritual workers burnt the clothes of the deceased. Note that in both instances it was a relationship between affines ended in this way.

85 In the past, other bodily hair of the bereaved was also removed (cf. Mountford 1958; Spencer 1914). Besides the burning of the hair on the lower legs (see below) I only saw one widow having her hair cut.

86 The Larrakia were Aborigines from the mainland who stole Tiwi wives in the 1860s (cf. chapter 2). At the end of the 1980s, 'Larrakian' and 'Larrakian dog' or the Tiwi equivalent *imopungi* (female *imopunga*, derived from *mopa* or 'climbing up' the way dogs have sex irrespective of incestuous relationships) was used for a person who had had illicit sex (though it was used more loosely by younger people).

87 She mentioned the names of three women from Bathurst Island. They were *aminiyarti* with Tobias: that is, they belonged to a one-'grandfather' group. Of course, as *mutuni* they belonged to another matriclan than Tobias. Their *irumwa* (father's and father's sister's matriclan) was the same as Tobias' matriclan or *imunga*, namely Pungaluwila (Stone clan). Jasmine was proud of the song she had performed. She asked me to record it on tape for her, whereafter she let her sisters and other female relatives listen to the recorded song.

88 Nancy explained this as follows: Jerome mentioned his friend (*mantani*), that is, Tobias' father Minapini. Minapini and Jerome were 'friends' or 'relations', members of one 'fight company', because both their fathers belonged to the same matriclan (namely *utaliwi*). Minapini had put up a spear at the house which meant that his son lived there because a one-sided barbed spear stood for a son. Someone had taken his son's life; in other words, somebody had taken the spear away. That somebody, according to Nancy, was a spear. That is to say, Tobias was killed by another son of Minapini. This could only be his brother Jacob. Jacob's spirit had stabbed Tobias to death, retaliating for being speared by Tobias. It must be noted that Jerome's song was 'gammon' or pretending. Jerome explored the possibility that Tobias' violent death made square (level) his brother's death.

Chapter 6

89 In March 1912, Spencer observed a yam ritual on Melville Island with male as well as female initiates (1914: 95-111; 1928: 658-76). Hart, who conducted fieldwork on Bathurst Island in 1928 and 1929, reports that 'For females there were no initiation ceremonies' (Hart & Pilling 1960: 93). Elsewhere, however, Hart states 'the normal initiation ceremonies are carried out continuously from the age of seventeen to the age of about twenty-six for a man and from ten to nineteen for a girl', whereafter he lists seven male and seven female 'initiation-grade names' (1931: 186). In a later publication he writes that male initiation began when a man was about fourteen or fifteen (Hart & Pilling 1960: 93-4, 72). Harney and Elkin (1943: 231) also mention there were male and female initiates in the *kulama* but it is not clear if and exactly when Harney observed the *kulama* rituals prior to 1943. In April-May 1954, Harney, Goodale and Mountford observed a *kulama* ritual near Snake Bay on Melville Island where five men participated but there were no initiates (Mountford 1958: 122-3; Goodale 1970: 351, 1971: 184). Tiwi initiation had ceased to exist, according to Mountford (1958: 122). Goodale, however, learned during a visit in 1962 that since 1954 seven men had become initiates; 'The average age of these seven men in 1954 was thirty years, and all but one was married at that time' (1971: 204). She expected it would not take long before Tiwi would stop performing the *kulama* ritual and the initiation procedures (ibid.: 225). In the yam rituals observed by Brandl (1971) in 1969 and Grau (1983) in 1981, no initiates took part either. Grau notes a man mentioned as uninitiated in 1969 by Brandl happened to be fully initiated and performing the *kulama* in 1981 (Grau 1983: 182-3). In 1989, this man planned to hold a yam ritual together with another man who had missed out for a few years, but at the last moment they decided not to carry out their plans. In one *kulama* ritual I attended in 1989 one of the participating men, about sixty-one years old, reached a higher grade of initiation.

90 Hertz writes, '[I]f death for the collective consciousness, is indeed the passage from the visible society to the invisible, it is also a step exactly analogous to that by which a youth is withdrawn from the company of women and introduced into that of adult men. (...) The similarity of the two phenomena is so fundamental that this change is often brought about by the pretended death of the aspirant, followed by his resurrection into a superior life' (1960: 80). Symbolic killing in Tiwi ritual will be further discussed in section 6.5.

91 For ethnographic information on Tiwi initiations in former times, see the first-hand reports of Spencer (1914: 92-115), Fry (1949; 1950), and Hart (1928/29; 1931: 286; 1974: 349-50; Hart & Pilling 1960: 93-5). Further information based on accounts of Tiwi people has been provided by Harney and Elkin (1943: 231-2), Mountford (1958: 122-43), Goodale (1971: 204-23), and Brandl (1971).

92 In 1989, for instance, I saw a ritual usually performed when the *kulama* yams had been 'buried' or covered in an earth oven instead carried out at a freshly made grave mound instead of the usual burial ceremonies. In the past, the deceased, a devout Catholic, had committed herself to the mission personnel that after her death no 'pagan' funeral dances (*yoi*) would be performed. After some arguments and discussion in the graveyard, the bereaved decided to respect the deceased's will but to hold a small ritual nevertheless. I was told the same ritual, taken from the *kulama*, had been carried out at the grave mound of a senior man buried out in the bush to lift the remaining taboos in 1991, about a year after the final mortuary rituals had been performed. The bereaved sat around the grave mound and tapped the earth with their hands, making the accompanying sounds and body movements of the mythological pelican Alipiura shaking the water from its feathers. The sand of the grave mound that had been on their hands, I was told, explained the good luck of the deceased's 'grandchildren', who took the winnings in a card game afterwards.

93 The interwovenness of Tiwi ritual action could be confusing for observers who came to the islands. In February 1913, Fry, for instance, arrived at the scene of a *kulama* ritual, led by Simon's grandfather Korupu, and described it as a 'mourning rite'. It was on the third day of the yam ritual. Fry states, 'It appeared that a death ceremony was in progress' (1949: 79).

94 In Turner's definition, 'A ritual is a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actors' goals and interests' (1973: 1100). See Seremetakis (1991) for a view of ritual without clear-cut beginnings and ends.

95 Tobias performed such a song for me, taken from 'the middle of the beginning' of the ceremony. It is about a man on Bathurst Island who went in the direction of Melville Island. The subject matter is food, and therefore it is probably connected with the ceremonial preparation of the cycad fruits, the former wet season staple food: 'Shoot him [the buffalo] with a rifle./Knock him down!/And then we cut him up, a lot of meat./Been lucky!/Woman and children have a good feed.'

96 Unfortunately, many of the details have been lost and comparatively little about the *muruntika* has been recorded (cf. Hart & Pilling 1960: 34; Mountford 1958: 129-30; Goodale 1971: 180-1; Brandl 1971: 329-31). The precise connection between the *muruntika* and the initiation remains unclear (Brandl 1971: 331) but some of the initiation procedures, and especially the removal of a necklace (*marinkwoni*), ending the last of the seven grades of initiation, appear to have happened at the same time (Spencer 1914: 110; Fry 1950: 167; Mountford 1958: 129-30).

97 In 1990 Jerome, for instance, composed a song about Tiwi men who had no money when asked by a male, but when a female made the same request, money came rapidly out of their pockets. 'They reckon it is true', he said. When in 1986 the pope visited Australia he sang about it in the *kulama*, stating that the pope came to return the 150 Tiwi wives who the missionary Gsell (later known as 'the bishop with 150 wives') had taken from Tiwi men (cf. chapter 2).

98 These are two examples of how people's ways of establishing the proper time for the rituals reflect their identities: Sam was a man of the Clear sky dreaming (*wampaka*) and Simon was a man of the Fire clan (*kutalini*), who used pandanus (*miarti*), his dreaming, to set the grass on fire.

99 Neither this seclusion of the men and hunting nor the collection of yams by women (below) took place with the *kulama* witnessed by Mountford and Goodale in 1954 (Goodale 1971: 184-5).

100 Berndt translates *kilimini* as 'strong odour from sweat' (1950: 297). I was told this 'smell make people go sleep'.

101 The term *impirni*, translated for me as 'he who hits/kills me', was also used for a man who flogs or kills (e.g., a policeman and a sneak attacker). The verb to kill has in Tiwi (-*pirni*, cf. Osborne 1974) and in the local English the double meaning of to hit and to kill.

102 I was told the *ningani*, spirit in the mangroves, in one of the first yam rituals was 'finished' in the water and afterwards spit out in all directions. To go down into the water was described to me as a means, especially when one had been employing mainland (love) magic, to get rid of another small spirit, *pemenua*..

103 Hart (1928/29) describes exactly the same ritual of clearing the ears and putting two little sticks upright in the ground being performed by first initiates in the context of a postfuneral ritual (*ilanigha*).

104 This spirit was an important dreaming of the patrilineal descendants of Puruntatameri. The first song performed in the *kulama* by one of these people had to be about *jamparipari*. Simon frequently performed the dance of this spirit, with bangles on his arms and going round with stretched arms making a particular sound. Spencer calls it a shooting star. The armlets of a third-grade intitiate were 'supposed to aid in protecting him against any shooting star' (1914: 106). These bangles were woven of pandanus leaves. My informants explained pandanus (*miarti*) was the mother-in-law of *jamparipari*, and, therefore, the latter could not come near pandanus. The cottonwood tree, called *tawari*, wherein the spirit stayed, was never found in the vicinity of a pandanus. The red-eyed spirit was said to move through the air 'like a rocket', chucking its victims into the sea west of Bathurst Island. Victims of car accidents were said to have crashed when they turned their heads upon hearing the whistle of *jamparipari*. Harney & Elkin discuss *jamparipari* in terms of magic: '[T]he idea is to bring the destroyer, Lamparipari, upon the victim. This is done by burning a piece of blood--a

hard piece which has dried up--and letting the wind carry the smell to the victim. The latter becomes affected because Lamparipari is attracted to this smell and sucks out his blood' (1943: 232).

105 Brandl, however, states that Wuntherini, the mythological sea eagle who also took part in the first *kulama*, was represented here (1971: 270). But see Grau (1983: 174) who mentions the pelican too. There might be differences between the *kulama* rituals, depending on the personnel. The rituals witnessed by Grau and I in Pularumpi were dominated by people who had the pelican as their dreaming.

106 The singer's 'brother-in-law' and another Tiwi man went on secret missions in an American submarine to Timor, then occupied by the Japanese, during the Second World War (see also Pye 1985: 95-6).

107 Hart (1928/29) notes the men before throwing the pieces of ant-bed first sat down holding spears.

108 Hart (1928/29) mentions the *kulama* yams were symbolically speared with grass stalks before they were eaten. The men placed a piece of yam on the head and shoulders of a second-grade intitiate saying 'a charm for plenty tucker'. He had to let the yam fall off 'so that when he goes bush he will find plenty tucker (not necessarily kolemma [*kulama* yams] but anything.'

109 The only time *kulama* yams were eaten was at the end of the ritual (cf. Goodale 1982: 207). I was told that when the *kulama* yams were ripe 'everything [that is, all kinds of yams] is ready' (cf. Spencer 1914: 103). Therefore, Goodale's thesis that the *kulama* yams might have been a famine food (1971: 223; 1982: 207) seems unlikely. She acknowledges there is no evidence of periods of scarcity experienced by the islanders (1971: 223).

110 On the first of October, 1989, in the morning of the second day of a final mortuary ritual out in the bush, after we had slept near the grave located next to her father's grave, the widower sang: (Dead woman saying) 'You got to have *ajipa* today.'/'We will be finished [*tupokiei*, end of the *kulama*] after that'; (The widower saying) 'She is still underneath fire [in the *kulama* earth oven] at Karumurarimili [her father's burial site].'/'We will start *ajipa* today with a big mob of people.' At the end of this ritual (*iloti*) mortuary poles would be erected around the grave mound and the widower given a ritual bath. Note that in the *kulama* the order is reversed: first the *kulama* men have a ritual bath, then they erect saplings in a round, and finally (when these have been destroyed by fire) a mound is made.

111 As other attributes of the ritual symbol Turner mentions 'multiple meanings', 'unification of apparently disparate significata' ('interconnected by analogy or by association in fact or thought'), and 'polarization of significata' (1973: 1100). These have become clear above.

112 Goodale however states that the women 'are responsible for the maintenance of all food resources in symbolic and culturally significant actions', while 'population maintenance (...) is the concern and responsibility of men' (1982: 203). I cannot but disagree with her argument in relation to the gender divisions, which she in fact narrows down to sex, in Tiwi society. Goodale, for instance, argues that 'the unborn spirit children [are] sought exclusively by men, not women' (ibid.). Not only the 'own father' (Goodale 1982: 204) but also the father's father, the father's sister, and the father's father's sister may dream about the spirit child. Therewith, spiritual conception among the Tiwi is not an exclusively male affair. Significant, however, is that these patrilineal relatives are conceived of as 'fathers', like mother's brothers may be viewed as 'mothers'. The neat 'division of labor in a divided universe', that is foraging by women in locations designated in the language as of male gender and foraging by men in locations designated as of female gender as far as items foraged by either exclusively women or exclusively men are concerned (Goodale 1982: 202-4) becomes blurred when we look at the sexual division of labour proper. At least in my experience the main part of the diet foraged is collected by women in the mangroves, linguistically speaking femine in gender.

113 Hart jotted in his notebook 'All very old men and very old women savvy [know] to make rain (...) old women savvy better than men' (1928/29). When it started raining during hunting trips we sat down under pandanus trees for protection against *amputji*, the rainbow

snake, whose mother-in-law was pandanus. A rain of sand was thrown in various directions and the women doing it said 'you go away' (*piri piri tuwari*). The hand was held in the reversed position of the signal for rain (fingers stretched downwards). This was supposed to stop the rain.

114 Sometimes they also pronounced '*korupu-korupu-korupu*', an identity marker of the one-'grandfather'-group (*aminiyarti*) formed after Korupu's death (about 1919). Like Korupu, an abbreviation of Patankorupu, his patrilineal actual and classificatory descendants all had names of sharks. Jerome had been given, among many other ones, his father's name Korupulimirri. The Tiwi word for being 'emotionally disturbed' is *korupwari* (cf. Berndt 1950). Korupu was described to me as a 'doctor' and 'magic man'. He could look through people's bodies, was a clairvoyant, and was the only one who dared to go into the jungle in the night. To do more justice to the complexity of Jerome's song than I could do here for the sake of clarity it must be noted he also referred to his own personal experiences of loss. Jerome became an orphan when he was a little child. His classificatory father Womatukimi or Old Frog taught him things in life such as spear-making skills so he could become an expert spear-maker like his own father (in the ritual context these spears stand for people, (grand)children or wives).

115 Tobias' mother and Edmund were said to have one *ameni*, grandfather; that is, their respective grandfathers (clan brothers) were conceived of as conceptually one (*jinani*). Therefore, Edmund and Tobias' mother were considered 'siblings'.

116 The relationships between square brackets were pointed out to me by Nancy in her translation of the song text.

117 McCarthy remarks that 'the spear is the principal weapon of the Aborigines, and its use for the kill is the climax of many hunting methods' (cited in F. Rose 1987: 69). Rose further states, 'the animal was usually given the *coupe de grâce* with the spear. In view of the economic importance of the spear, it is not surprising that its significance was recognised in the ideology and in the superstructure generally of the society' (1987: 73). He mentions Tiwi barbed spears as 'the classical examples' (ibid.: 73-4).

118 I believe the Tiwi exclamation 'finished' (*weya tua*) at the end of each ritual song and dance performance belongs to the same order of symbolic termination.

119 For a review see Ohnuki-Tierney (1992).

Chapter 7

120 I briefly sketch the procedure in the Anglo-Australian criminal courts. The accused, in accordance with Australian common law (and Article 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty. In the adversary procedure of the courts, the onus is on the prosecution to prove its case 'beyond all reasonable doubt'. The standards of proof in criminal cases happen to be much stricter than in civil cases, where an allegation can be proven to be true on a 'reasonable balance of probabilities' (Chrisholm & Nettheim 1974: 65-6). The formula in the oath-taking, to tell 'the truth, the whole thruth and nothing but the truth', urges the witnesses to hold nothing back. But a trial at law, in the words of Napley, 'does not in fact involve the pursuit of the whole truth'; one 'is concerned only to prove or disprove the particular allegation' (1987: 31-2). In Australian criminal cases a jury of twelve decides on facts presented as evidence to the court. The judge rules, on basis of the rules of evidence, what is admissible as evidence and directs the jury as to matters of law. Evidence has to be relevant to the issue in question, hearsay evidence is excluded, and an eventual confession or statements to the police will only be admitted as evidence when voluntarily made and when the person in question has been properly cautioned about the right not to incriminate oneself and the right to remain silent (Chrisholm & Nettheim 1974).

121 When Kevin stood trial in the NT Supreme Court, the Crown prosecutor said the following in his summing up to the jury: 'Ladies and gentlemen, confessions - and this is a matter of common sense, not a matter of any legal magic - confessions, in ordinary life, are not made by innocent people. I suggest to you that in your experience even for the most

trivial matter, that neither you nor people you know are willing to confess to any fault unless they believe the confession is true. (...) [I]t's just contrary to human experience that anybody says: "Yes, I did this" when this is a serious thing which he or she appreciates will affect them seriously. The more serious the matter is, the more reluctant people are to confess. It's also a fact of life, ladies and gentlemen, that we accept almost as a matter of course that when people do confess to fault of any sort, that what they say is true' (Transcript of Proceedings, The Supreme Court of the Northern Territory, S.C.C. No. 21 of 1989, Darwin, August 9, 1989, p. 819).

[122] Ethnographers, as Clifford makes clear, have come to realise that they are working in a political context with power relations and ingrained ways of representing others that cannot be completely kept in check, so that, at the most, 'partial truths' can be presented (1986: 7; cf. Myers 1988).

[123] I exercised my rights as a member of the public to attend the full committal hearings in the Court of Summary Jurisdiction and the murder trial in the Supreme Court. I will cite from the court transcripts with permission of the accused and his Counsel for defence.

[124] This statement and other statements to the police that will be cited below were read out in court.

[125] A contradiction with the statements of his parents that did not lead to further questioning by the detectives.

[126] Transcript of Proceedings, The Supreme Court of the Northern Territory, S.C.C. No. 186 of 1988, Darwin, July 24, 1989, pp. 28-9.

[127] For discussions of the problems of communication between Aborigines and the police see Strehlow 1936; Elkin 1947; Eggleston 1976; Liberman 1981; Coldrey 1987; Foley 1988; Ligertwood 1988. Foley (1988) presents a good overview of the relations between Aborigines and the police, and their historical background.

[128] 'The tricking of a criminal into an admission of his crime is applauded in many famous detective stories', Elwin writes with regard to the Maria of India, '[i]t is probable that unless some such methods were used a majority of Maria criminals would go unconvicted' (1977: 177). The status of a confession to a crime as evidence, however, is disputed even in Western societies: suspects appear to admit crimes they did not commit to get attention, to protect others or as a result of pressure exerted by the police among other reasons (Wagenaar in *NRC Handelsblad*, 4.2.1993 and 9.3.1993, see also Ginzburg 1991).

[129] My informants, for instance, could not distinguish the voices on tape of two men, Isaac and his classificatory son Jerome, let alone the skills of Tiwi people in mimicking other persons' voices.

[130] I was told Kevin had had an affair with Anna, an elderly widow. At the time of the killing Anna was Mike's lover. It might be inferred the police tracker Mike and Kevin, two clan brothers, were competitors for the sexual attentions of Anna. This point suggests Mike had an axe to grind with Kevin. Hence, Mike's statement, creating suspicions towards Kevin, must be treated with circumspection. When Kevin was released on bail, the tracker approached me and said, 'Now I have two other suspects'. He had loyalities both to his own people and the local police constable. He probably did not want to appear inadequate and might have wished to made a good impression on the latter. He must have been well aware that his putative father was on the CIB detectives' shortlist of suspects. His statement provided two firm suspects, his girlfriend and his father, with an alibi.

[131] Kevin was at liberty to stay in the Old Camp as far as the police were concerned. It was not until Monday morning, about ten o'clock, the police ordered the people living in the Old Camp to leave the area temporarily.

[132] Note that both Nancy and Sam made a statement to the police that when they came from the club they walked home. They did not mention, as follows from the statement of their son Regis, they got supper at their daughter Maud's place, located just on the other side of the main road from the Old Camp (that is, in Tiwi perception, on their way home, to the south).

[133] On their request my wife Jeanette, for instance, was on watch (for she could stop white women) while the female Tiwi witnesses went to the toilet in the Supreme Court building, so they could leave the door open and keep in touch.

134 This is not to say that Aborigines, including Tiwi, are never physically assaulted by police officers. Powers the police, as representives enforcing the law of Ango-Australian society, still have (e.g., drunken people, at the discretion of police officers, may be locked up in the cells overnight.), and the grim historical experiences of Aborigines in relations with the police, cannot be put aside but attribute to the, justified or unjustified, fears of Aborigines questioned or held by police officers.

135 It is also in the nature of interaction among Aboriginal speakers that they tell what they already know and enter in an exchange of information. Part of the story thus first has to be told before additional information can be elicited from the other person (cf. Foley 1988: 170).

136 See Von Sturmer for a discussion of silence as a sign of disapproval (1981: 17). Liberman remarks that silence may be 'utilized mostly when the initiative of the scene has been handed over to the Aborigine and the Aborigine is unwilling to risk exercising it. The silence constitutes a period of holding during which a local order may develop without the Aboriginal person having to initiate it' (1981: 250-1). If we rule out contradiction, silence was the only option left to Kevin.

137 In Aboriginal societies, according to Sansom, the witness is a kind of trouble-helper (1980: 240 ff.). Of all people, Dick was Jasmine's eldest brother. According to Tiwi law ways, he was one of the people who had to protect her against the attempts of Tobias (who had been killed) to secure her. Herewith, his own marriage was also at stake: in return for his wife Sally (of the Stone clan, *aringkuwila*) Dick's sister Jasmine (actual brother and sister of the Pandanus clan, *miartiwi*) had been given to Sally's clan brother Andrew.

138 Note the question mark, the detective repeatedly made these kinds of Freudian typing errors: e.g., question 177 on page 10: 'Why did you stab that dead person?'; Answer of the suspect: 'Because he was trying to kill me?'. I admit the task of an interrogating detective is extremely difficult. The difficulties of language, the lack of comprehension on both sides, unfamiliarity with the suspect's cultural background, and the readiness of the Aboriginal suspect to say anything, might drive the interrogating detective easily into despair. Sympathetic to the suspects or not, one police detective under cross-examination once told the court about his method of interrogation, 'It is probably a habit to suggest an answer that is logical' (Eggleston, cited in Liberman 1981: 248).

139 Transcript of Proceedings, Court of Summary Jurisdiction, No. 8824150, Pularumpi, February 2, 1989, p. 18.

140 Transcript of Proceedings, Court of Summary Jurisdiction, ibid., pp. 24-5.

141 Transcript of Proceedings, ibid., p. 29.

142 Transcript of Proceedings, Court of Summary Jurisdiction, Nos 8815920 and 8824150, Darwin, February 13, 1989, pp. 31-9.

143 Transcript of Proceedings, ibid., p. 41.

144 Transcript of Proceedings, ibid., p. 42.

145 This was the case of Pungewati. He speared the killer of his brother's son to death. Simon said Pungewati went to court for it in Nguiu, so it must have been in the early days of the Bathurst Island Mission (founded in 1911).

146 The concept of 'payback' arises from the early ethnographic literature. Spencer and Gillen state, 'Amongst the Central Australian natives there is no such thing as belief in natural death (...) in the normal condition of the tribe the death of one individual is followed by the murder of someone else who is supposed to be guilty of having caused the death' (1968[1899]: 476). One wonders how long 'the normal condition of the tribe' would last. The idea of a 'payback' has been absorbed in police handbooks and in Anglo-Australian common sense. Furthermore, the belief in a rigorous payback system, and the existence of the central Australian Kurdaitcha man (cf. ibid.: chapter 13), is extended to all Aboriginal societies.

147 The Chamberlains' case has been front page news in Australia from 1981 onwards. Lindy Chamberlain was charged with murder after the disappearance of her baby at Ayers Rock (Northern Territory). She claimed a dingo had taken the baby (see Bryson 1988;

Chamberlain 1990). Outside Australia the case has become famous through Fred Schepisi's film *A Cry in the Dark* (*Evil Angels*) with Sam Neill and Meryl Streep (1988, Warner Bros). Kevin's case was hardly covered by the media but there are some striking resemblances and overlaps, not only in personnel and setting but also in the workings of criminal investigation and the production of evidence to the criminal courts in the Northern Territory.

148 Out of the court, he asked me, why they did keep him in Darwin all that time for such nonsense while on Melville Island his wife was laying on her death-bed? When this was made known to the Crown prosecutor Simon could go off to Pularumpi immediately after he had given evidence in court.

149 Transcript of Proceedings, The Supreme Court of the Northern Territory, S.C.C. No. 186 of 1988, Darwin, July 24-31, 1989, pp. 6-327.

150 Ligertwood notes that, as a result of this, 'only rarely will defence counsel call an Aboriginal accused to testify in his defence' (1988: 203).

151 Transcript of Proceedings, ibid., July 31-August 4, 1989, pp. 344-985.

152 This time he was not sworn in but affirmed because the judge was not satisfied he understood the swearing in on the bible (ibid., p. 396).

153 Actually it was a double favourable service: leading the detectives away from the real trouble, and getting rid of the policemen with their prying questions. Released on bail, the 40-year-old bachelor Kevin was provided with a wife, a former widow with two daughters.

154 Transcript of Proceedings, ibid, August 2, 1989, p. 504.

155 Transcript of Proceedings, ibid., p. 508.

156 It is admitted even in cases concerning Aborigines (e.g., Wilson 1982: 115). See Biernoff (1984) for a discussion of the problems involved in the application of psychiatric notions developed in a non-Aboriginal tradition to Aborigines, especially when there is disregard of the subjective reality of Aboriginal people. With regard to the Tiwi, see Reser (1991) versus Robinson (1990).

157 Transcript of Proceedings, ibid., August 9, 1989, pp. 816-7.

Chapter 8

158 See the film *Mourning for Mangatobi* (1975, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, directed by Curtis Levy). See also the observations of the Dutch in 1705 (chapter 2).

159 Although this seems a rather idiosyncratic action, as a matter of fact it is not. Both Ruth's stepfather Tobias (stabbed to death) and Murielle's father (poisoned) had been killed. 'Talk' (*nemara*) in these rituals is on the level of those men's father's generation. Murielle's father's father had been killed with an axe on top of Arimo creek by Isaac's father. Isaac in turn had chased Ruth's stepfather with an axe.

160 He would paint himself up with white clay and red and yellow ochres, he told me, because 'only white is nothing'.

161 It must be noted that Tobias' dreaming in this context was not predator but prey: the mullet fish.

162 Depending on the context the blades figured as bird's wings, shark fins, shark teeth, the sharp edges of waves producing cliffs at the coastline, or the flapping wings of a butterfly.

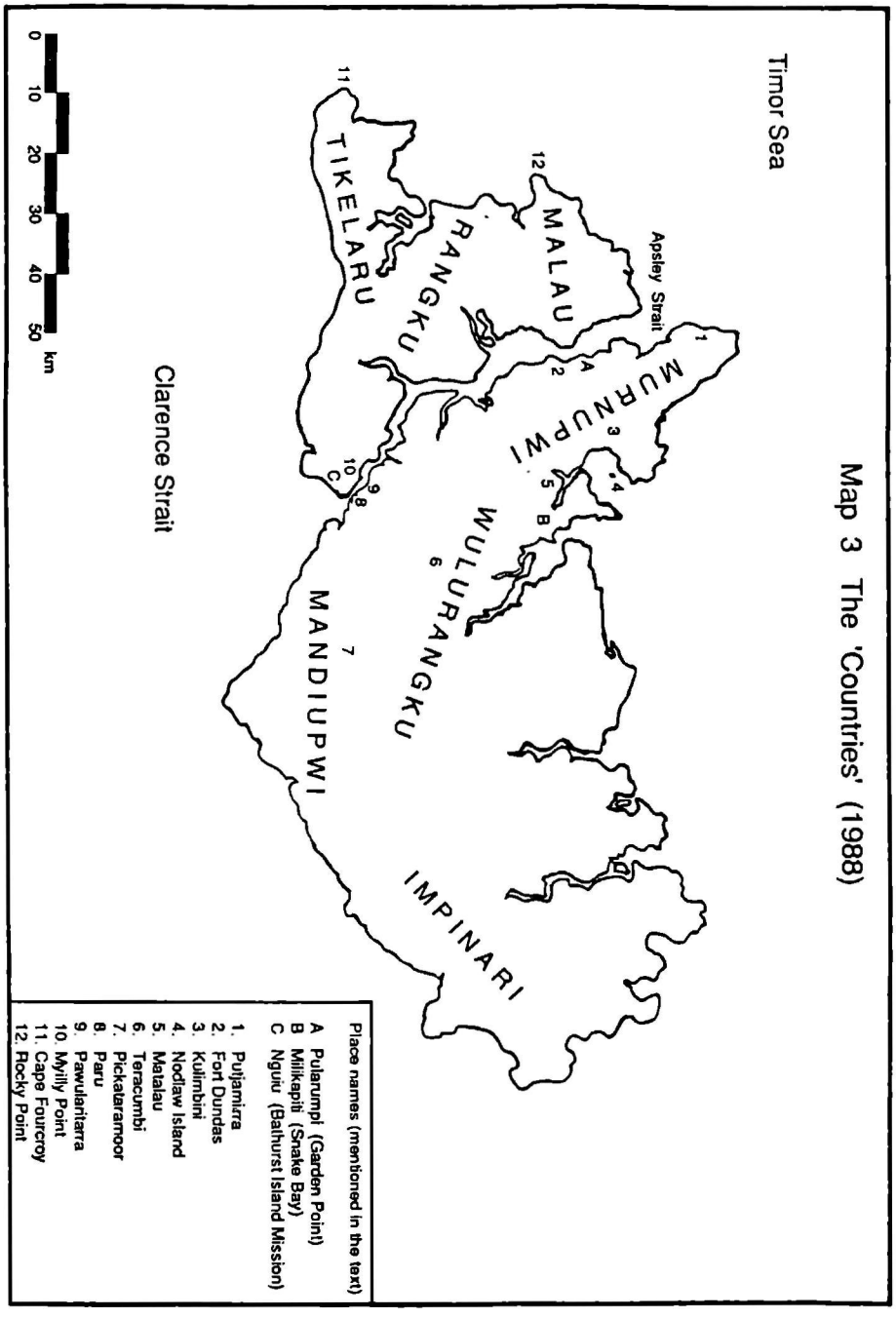
163 My data do not support Goodale's statement that in contrast to interactions in daily life 'the obligations acquired during a *pukamani* [the postfuneral rituals for a deceased person] end immediately thereafter' (1971: 317).

164 According to Hart, however, 'Tiwi grave posts are a specialised method of satisfying the need, which all societies feel, for every individual in a society to give public proof of his sorrow at the death of any member of that society' (1932: 18). And Goodale writes, 'The poles (...) symbolize the status and prestige of the deceased, as well as those of his surviving close kin. These symbols are necessary to facilitate the transfer of the deceased from the world of the living to the world of the *mobuditi* [*mopadruwi*] with the same relative status and prestige' (1971: 310).

165 'This species, found naturally on Melville and Bathurst Islands, parts of Cobourg and Cape York Peninsula, (...) naturally grows 17 to 28 m, but specimens 35 m tall and 1 m in diameter have been recorded' (Hearne 1975: 61).
166 Myers states that among the Pintubi Aborigines 'kin status is largely a matter of feeling' (1986: 104).

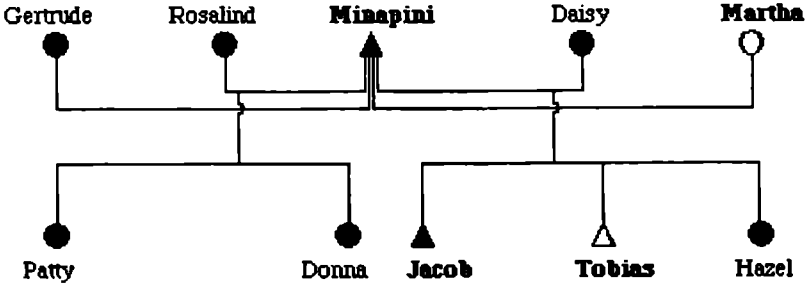
Chapter 9

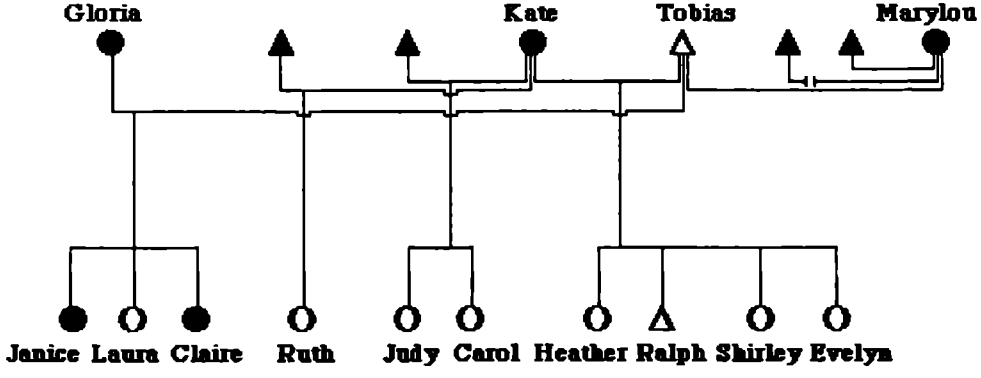
167 Competition tends to be more fierce between distantly related 'brothers' than between closely related 'brothers' whose relationships usually are characterised by a great measure of generosity.
168 It must be noted that Tiwi wives in cases of adultery act against their husbands as well as the other way round.
169 How this relates to biological aspects of human nature, the enhancement of reproductive success and the promotion of inclusive fitness, needs further consideration.
170 Pilling states, '[O]nly a small percentage of young male adults survived fights and sneak attacks' (1958: 112). This statement might be somewhat exaggerated in view of the data Pilling presents in a 1978 paper. In a period of twenty years there were forty-five recorded deaths in a population of about 1,000. Let us say for the sake of argument that all were males and all were young male adults; then a hypothetical nine per cent of these men died in a period long enough to grow up a bit, not a small percentage but we might assume if we only have these data to go on that the statement is tendentious. Of the forty recorded homicide victims in the pre-mission period (before 1911), according to Pilling, three were females, and of the males he estimated that twenty-two were older than thirty-five in age, fifteen male victims were younger (ibid.: 34). For the 1890-1909 period he estimated the age of twenty-three male victims, of whom ten were younger than thirty-six years old (ibid.: 36).
171 For references see chapter 1.
172 See Pilling (1958: 236) for another Tiwi case.One of the killers said they had not recognised their victim, a clan brother, because his body had been covered with ochres. One man put to the killer 'You got eye', but he responded 'I no more savvy [know - ev]. Paint 'em everywhere.'
173 Two of his daughters lived together with white men.
174 Reid, for instance, found that among the Yolngu Aborigines statements about the cause of a person's death had social implications: 'When an individual advances a hypothesis, he is conscious not only of its plausibility in the light of available facts but of the consequences of voicing it at all. If judiciously advanced it may form an effective strategy for advancing his own interests. If not, it may rebound on him and his family' (1983: 112).
175 In Tiwi songs and views the Germans, alluding to films about the Second World War they had seen in the past, were the bad guys, so to speak. In contrast, the Americans were the heroes.

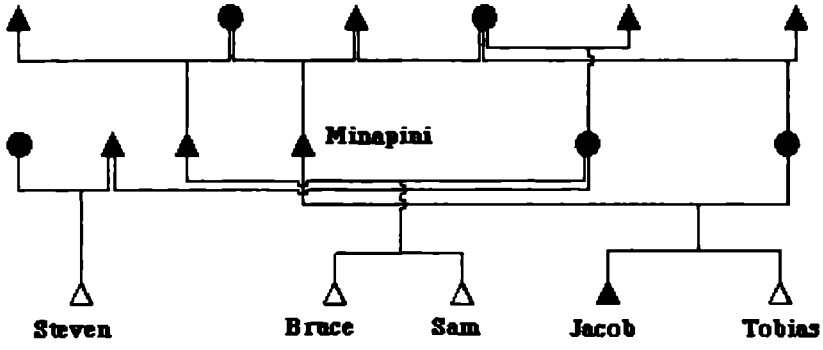

Map 3 The 'Countries' (1988)
Timor Sea
Apsley Strait
MURNUPWI
MALAU
RANGKU
TIKELARU
WULURANGKU
MANDIUPWI
IMPINARI
Clarence Strait
0 10 20 30 40 50 km
Place names (mentioned in the text)
A Pularumpi (Garden Point)
B Milikapiti (Snake Bay)
C Nguiu (Bathurst Island Mission)
1. Puijamirra
2. Fort Dundas
3. Kulimbini
4. Nodlaw Island
5. Matalau
6. Teracumbi
7. Pickataramoor
8. Paru
9. Pawulartarra
10. Mylly Point
11. Cape Fourcroy
12. Rocky Point

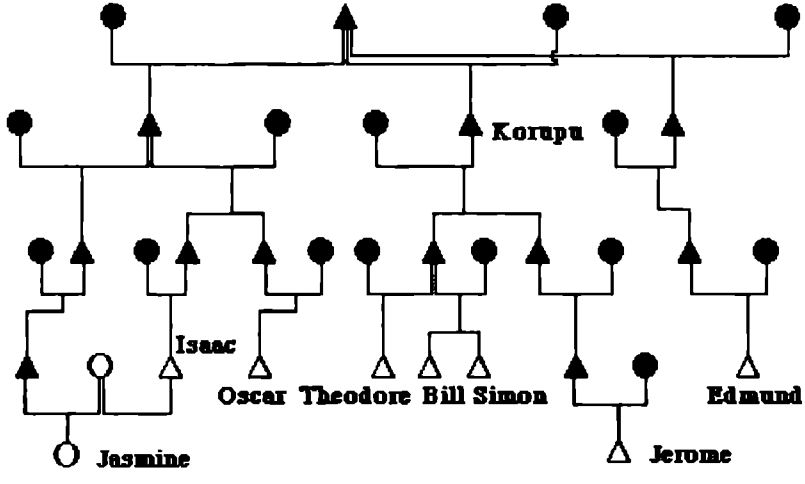
GENEALOGIES

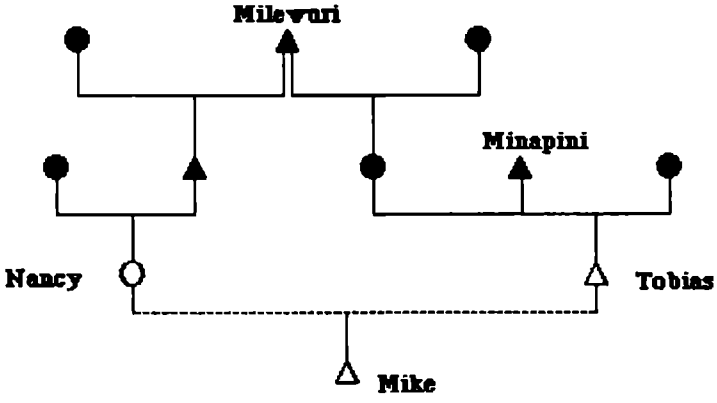
Selected genealogies of significant relationships mentioned in the text:
- Minapini's wives Gertrude, Rosalind, Daisy, and Martha, and their children Patty, Donna, Jacob, Tobias and Hazel
- Tobias' wives Gloria, Kate and Marylou, and their children Janice, Laura, Claire, Ruth, Judy, Carol, Heather, Ralph, Shirley and Evelyn
- Tobias and his classificatory brothers Steven, Bruce and Sam
- Members of the Pamantari patriline
- Relationship of Tobias and Nancy
- Tobias, Jerome, Kate, Jasmine, Isaac and Laura

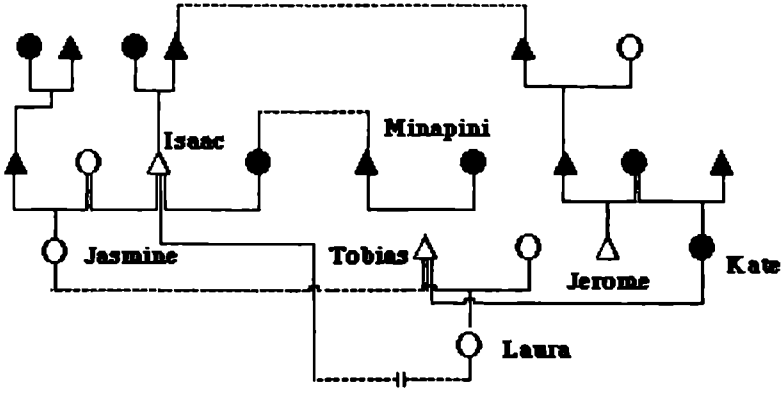





Minapini
Steven
Bruce
Sam
Jacob
Tobias


Korapu
Isaac
Oscar
Theodore
Bill
Simon
Edmund
Jasmine
Jerome


Milewori
Minapini
Nancy
Tobias
Mike


Isaac
Minapini
Jasmine
Tobias
Jerome
Kate
Laura

GLOSSARY

For Tiwi kinship and mortuary kinship terminology I refer to table 1 and table 2 (chapter 5).

ajipa	polychrome, stage of the seasonal yam ritual
ambaru-song	type of mourning song
aminiyarti	one-'grandfather' group
amputji	spirit, the Rainbow Snake
aramipi	'relations', (not marriageable) members of related clans
arawuringkiri	spear with barbs on two sides
arini	tough man
arntukuni	coward
big-headed	skilled song composer
billabong	Australian-English for a small lake or a pool
big mob	a lot
boss	ceremonial leader
camp	dwelling place
cheeky	flouting of authority (Sansom 1980: 26)
corroboree	Australian-English for an Aboriginal ceremony
country	territorial affiliation, also surroundings of ancestral burial place
deaf	unable to understand in both senses (*orimi*)
dreaming	an affiliation with a location, environmental feature or natural species inherited patrilineally (Brandl 1971: 544)
dreaming dance	dance marking a 'dreaming'
dreaming place	location representing the seat of the mythological ancestress of father's and father's sister's clan
esky	Australian-English for a cool box
gammon	pretense
humbugging	courting or being nasty
ilanigha	mortuary ritual
ilanighi	first initiate

iloti	final mortuary ritual (literally, 'forever')
imanka	spirit, shadow, reflection, photograph, film
imunga	'skin group' or matriclan, also sun and breath
irumwa	'dreaming'
jamparipari	spirit
keramili	exchange of partners in marriage between matriclans
(to) kill	to kill, hit or injure
kulama	seasonal yam ritual
kruti	fruit (e.g., mangoes)
kwampi	sneak attacks, sneak attackers (male singular: *kwampini*)
Larrakian	person with unsanctioned love affairs
letterstick	message carved in a stick
relations	members of related clans (*aramipi*) [note that these clans do not exchange partners between them in marriage]
mamanukuni-song	type of mourning song
mantawi	friends (male singular: *mantani;* female singular: *mantanga*)
merekati	spirit connected with long grass
miarti	pandanus (mother-in-law of *jamparipari* and *amputji*)
milimika	ceremonial ring, cleared dancing ground
mob	loosely structured group
moluki	(ritual) bath or washing
mopadruwi	spirits of the dead (*mopaditi; mopadringa*)
moyla week	'nothing' week, that is, a week without a payday
muringelata	ritual with a young woman's first menses
muruntika	ritual at the beginning of the wet season
muruntawi	white people (*muruntani; muruntaka*)
naga	loincloth
nemara	talk, trouble, meeting
ngirramini	story, talk, word, argument, trouble
ningawi	small spirits living in the mangroves
old people	senior people of the past
old man	father or husband (senior man)
palingari	the (unspecified) past
payday	payday or time of ritual payments
pemenua	small spirit

plekuti	crying
pongkini	male peace maker, mostly a senior man
promise	person with whom a marriage has been arranged
pukamani	taboo or taboo-related
putuputu	sorrow
putaputuwi	spirit children
shade	windbreak, ceremonial hut or shelter
skin group	matriclan (*imunga*)
smoking	cleansing ritual with smoke
songwriter	song composer
sugar bag	Australian-English for wild honey
tapara	the moon
taringini	poisonous snake
tilamara	paint, ochres
tiwi	(living) people (*tini; tinga*)
tokwainga	goose-feather ball
tucker	food
tunkwaliti	spear with barbes on one side
walemani	axe
word	song text, message, argument
worker	person who performs services in mortuary ritual (*ambaru*)
yoi	dance and song ceremony

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SAMENVATTING

Deze studie handelt over de Tiwi Aborigines van Melville eiland en Bathurst eiland in noord-Australië en beoogt een beeld te geven van hun contemporaine cultuur. Getracht wordt een diagnose te stellen middels een uitgebreide gevalsgeschiedenis: de gebeurtenissen rondom de gewelddadige dood van een Tiwi man. Deze geschiedenis, zoals hier gerepresenteerd, is gebaseerd op de resultaten van zestien maanden antropologisch veldwerk (van september 1988 tot november 1989 en in october-november 1991) op de eilanden.

Een aanwassende school van sociale wetenschappers ziet de zogenaamde Aboriginal criminaliteit, en homicide in dit geval in bijzonder, als primair verbonden met vervreemding als gevolg van kolonisatie en overmatige bemoeienis van de Australische overheid. Een relatief groot aantal homicides zou een aanwijzing zijn voor de desintegratie van een Aboriginal samenleving. Uiteraard heeft kolonisatie, met inbegrip van missionering, een invloed gehad op het leven van Aborigines, maar de vraag is of daarmee hun samenlevingen volledig ontworteld zijn en hun cultuur teniet gedaan.

Ons beperkend tot de samenleving van Tiwi Aborigines kunnen we vast stellen dat hierin recentelijk een betrekkelijk groot aantal homicides plaats gevonden hebben. Mijn argument is dat hedendaagse gevallen van moord (ik gebruik hier de term zonder negatieve connotaties) in deze samenleving nog steeds beïnvloed worden door een zich evoluerende maar specifiek inheemse traditie.

Enerzijds is er dus de opvatting dat Aboriginal samenlevingen ten gevolge van de kolonisatie ontspoord zouden zijn, maar anderzijds worden Tiwi vaak geconfronteerd met de wijdverbreide opvatting dat met name zij, blijkens hun aanpassing aan de Australische samenleving, hun cultuur, met name de ceremoniële aspecten daarvan, verloren zouden hebben. Voor zover Tiwi elementen uit de westerse samenleving inpassen, zo luidt mijn argument, geschiedt dit op selectieve wijze zonder noodzakelijkerwijze hun specifiek eigen denkbeelden en waarden in discrediet te brengen (zij het dat er hier en daar tweeslachtigheden kunnen optreden). Door een uitvoerige etnografische analyse van vooral Tiwi seizoensrituelen en een uitgebreide cyclus van dodenriten probeer ik aan te tonen dat deze aspecten van hun cultuur tot op de dag van vandaag een rol van betekenis spelen.

In mijn aanpak sluit ik aan bij de traditie van de Manchester school in de Britse sociale antropologie en tracht ik met name de door Moore ontwikkelde vernieuwende theoretische inzichten toe te passen. De moord die ik in het veld meemaakte riep aanvankelijk raadsels bij mij op, maar

gaandeweg begon ik de gebeurtenissen die zich in verband met dit tragische voorval ontvouwden te zien als een manier om inzicht te krijgen in de hedendaagse Tiwi cultuur en samenleving. De periode van mijn veldwerk beschouwde ik als lopende geschiedenis en de gebeurtenissen met betrekking tot de moord als diagnostische gebeurtenissen in navolging van Moore. In de gehanteerde proces-benadering heb ik, in plaats van uit te gaan van de vanzelfsprekendheid van continuïteit, gewezen op de inspanningen die Tiwi zich moeten getroosten om bijvoorbeeld de voltrekking van rituelen te verwezelijken. Ook liet ik de onzekerheid van sociale actores over de (nabije) toekomst op het moment van handelen zien, alsmede de manier waarop zij zich telkenmale genoopt zagen zich aan te passen aan gewijzigde situaties. Het streven naar invloed en prestige, onder meer op het vlak van de huwelijkspolitiek, bracht rivaliteiten en uiteenlopende gezichtspunten met zich mee. In de 'extended case history', die tevens als een sociaal drama opgevat kan worden, heb ik de vitaliteit, onbepaaldheid en heterogeniteit van de Tiwi cultuur gedemonstreerd.

Deze casus vormt het raamwerk waarbinnen achtereenvolgens de onderzoekssetting, sociale organisatie en sociale geschiedenis; de levensgeschiedenissen van het latere slachtoffer en diens vader, een roemruchte sluipmoordenaar, het verloop en de escalatie van een conflict voorafgaande aan de moord, alsmede de voorgeschiedenis betreffende andere conflicten en moorden die aanleiding gaven tot grieven ten aanzien van het slachtoffer aan bod komen.

Voorts worden de eerste reacties van mensen uit de directe sociale omgeving van het slachtoffer op diens gewelddadige dood weergegeven, met name de rechtvaardigingen en mogelijke verklaringen voor de moord die tot uitdrukking worden gebracht en Tiwi rouwpraktijken, de roep om vergelding door de kinderen van het slachtoffer, de falende pogingen om de dader(s) of schuldige(n) aan te wijzen, de onderhandelingen omtrent de plaats waar het slachtoffer begraven moet worden en het ingrijpen en onderzoek van de Australische politie. De politie detectives die het onderzoek naar de moord uitvoeren stellen al spoedig een Tiwi man in staat van beschuldiging nadat deze man, van wie de plaatselijke bevolking aanneemt dat hij de daad wellicht niet gepleegd heeft, na herhaaldelijke verhoren een bekentenis aflegt. De man verdwijnt van het toneel. Op het vasteland brengt hij vijf maanden in de gevangenis door.

Op Melville eiland wordt het slachtoffer begraven in de rimboe naast zijn vader. De begrafenis trekt enorm veel belangstellenden. De onzekerheid omtrent de ware toedracht blijft echter voortbestaan en al worden er toespelingen gemaakt, de voorstanders van een vergeldingsactie kunnen niets ondernemen daar er onvoldoende uitsluitsel is, enkele mensen waar tegen verdenkingen gerezen zijn ontbreken en de Australische politie aanwezig is om ongeregeldheden te voorkomen. Aansluitend op de begrafenis worden een aantal reinigingsrituelen

voltrokken, zowel op de plek waar het slachtoffer woonde als in het toeristenkamp waar hij werkzaam was.

De eerstvolgende gelegenheden voor Tiwi om klaarheid in de zaak te brengen zijn de yam rituelen aan het eind van het natte seizoen. Van de aanvankelijke plannen om één groot ritueel van alle hierin ingewijden uit de drie Tiwi woonoorden op de plek des onheils te houden komt niets terecht; de ceremoniële leider en classificatorische vader van het slachtoffer van Bathurst eiland besluit zijn ritueel afzonderlijk te houden uit onvrede met de nalatigheid van zijn verwanten op Melville eiland om hem nader over het gebeurde in te lichten. Wanneer de deelnemers in het dorp waar de moord geschiedde op het punt staan het ritueel aan te vangen verschijnt plotseling de man die door de politie was opgepakt. Hij is op borgtocht vrijgelaten in afwachting van het verdere verloop van het rechtsproces. Daardoor ontstaat een nieuwe situatie. Het ritueel wordt uitgesteld. Twee mannen met plannen om deel te nemen, waaronder de stiefvader van een getrouwde vrouw waarmee het slachtoffer een omstreden relatie had, haken af. Wel geeft de stiefvader middels zijn voorgenomen liederen die hij desondanks voordraagt in de bierkantine te kennen dat hij door andere Tiwi vals beschuldigd is. Het ritueel, dat drie nachten en de tussenliggende dagen in beslag neemt, wordt opgedragen aan het slachtoffer. Vooral de eerste nacht, 'de nacht van het verdriet', staat in het teken van rouwbeklag. Dochters van het slachtoffer zijn gekomen om naar de rouwliederen te luisteren, tevens wordt verondersteld dat de identiteit van de dader(s) prijsgegeven zal worden. Wederom wordt aan het gebeurde gerefereerd, worden toespelingen gemaakt en tussentijdse beschuldigingen van de hand gewezen. Noch worden onomwonden namen van personen genoemd noch staan de daders of schuldigen op. Ruim een maand later heeft eenzelfde aan het slachtoffer gewijd ritueel, op een plek tegenover diens begraafplaats, op Bathurst eiland plaats. Een classificatorische broer van het slachtoffer van Melville eiland, die met hem in een conflict verwikkeld was, is daarbij aanwezig. Zijn oudere broer van Bathurst eiland besluit op het laatste moment niet deel te nemen. De eerste broer wordt gedurende het ritueel beschuldigd, maar hierop volgt een ontkenning, zij zouden immers met eenzelfde vader's moeder te nauw verwant zijn. Naast rouwliederen en liederen met toespelingen zingen de deelnemers liederen van wraak. De zoon en dochters van het slachtoffers beelden in een dans sluipmoordenaars uit en verkondigen zo met steun van de ceremoniële leider en andere verwanten vastbesloten te zijn de moord op hun vader te vergelden.

De voltooiing van de in gang gezette postbegrafenisrituelen, aan het slot waarvan dit zou kunnen geschieden, wordt vooruitgeschoven om de uitkomst van de rechtzaak in het hooggerechtshof op het vasteland af te wachten. De wijze waarop het Australische rechtssysteem de moordzaak afhandelde en met name de manier waarop de bekentenis van de Tiwi verdachte die terecht moest staan tot stand kwam vormden het onderwerp

van een afzonderlijk hoofdstuk. Een nauwgezette analyse stelde de validiteit van een dergelijke bekentenis ter discussie. Door het op de voet volgen van de Aboriginal getuigen, de verdachte en het publiek konden de Tiwi zienswijzen betreffende de Westerse rechtsgang en bewijsvoering aan het licht komen. De Westerse noties van de moord staan in sterk contrast met die van de Tiwi. Forensische wetenschappers kunnen niet tippen aan de gevolgtrekkingen die een Aboriginal getuige op basis van zijn ervaringskennis uit bewijsmateriaal kan maken, maar niettemin verwerpt de rechter deze getuigenis vanwege een gebrek aan Westerse kwalificaties van de Tiwi deskundige. Na een proces van drie weken in het hooggerechtshof spreekt de jury de verdachte uiteindelijk vrij. Voor het Australische rechtssysteem is de zaak daarmee afgedaan.

Op Melville eiland en Bathurst eiland zijn grote postbegrafenisrituelen voor het slachtoffer in voorbereiding. Het blijkt voor de betrokkenen geen eenvoudige opgave om deze rituelen, waaraan het principe van wederkerigheid ten grondslag ligt, te organiseren. Er moet flink gelobbyd worden. De rituelen zijn een manier om aanzien en invloed in deze samenleving te verwerven. In het dorp van de om het leven gebrachte man wordt de cyclus van dodenriten op eigenzinnige wijze begonnen op aandringen van een schoonbroer (de belangrijkste rituele werker) en een dochter van de overledene. De voortzetting wordt door onvoldoende mensen gedragen en loopt vertraging op. Pas veel later begint een classificatorische vader van de dode op Bathurst eiland, die besloten heeft er grote geldbedragen in te investeren, zijn cyclus van dodenriten. De naaste verwanten van de overledene hebben het vaste voornemen de vermoedelijke daders openlijk te straffen. Op Melville eiland zijn een aantal mensen bevreesd om de nacht aan het graf in de rimboe door te brengen. De eerder genoemde stiefvader is van plan zelf aparte dodenriten in het eigen dorp te organiseren, maar moet onder druk van anderen dit plan laten varen. In de late namiddag en avond komen de naaste verwanten van de dode van beide eilanden op de begraafplaats bijeen. Gedurende de nacht en in de vroege morgen worden rouwliederen gezongen. 's Morgens arriveert een menigte mensen, belangstellend publiek en deelnemers. De deelnemers van Melville eiland en van Bathurst eiland houden hun reinigingsrituelen afzonderlijk. Vervolgens heeft een serie van kleine gezamenlijke rituelen, waaronder een ritueel gevecht tussen werkelijke en potentiële echtgenoten, plaats. Daarna voeren een groep van Melville eiland en een groep van Bathurst eiland, elk aan een kant van het graf, gelijktijdig een groot ritueel uit. Er worden wederom toespelingen gemaakt, maar daar blijft het bij. Van de mensen waartegen de nauwe verwanten van de vermoorde man sterke verdenkingen koesteren is het merendeel niet aanwezig. Degene die wel ter plaatse is neemt zelf een speer ter hand en roept om de politie. Hij zegt dat hij bestolen is. Andere Tiwi houden het erop dat de geest van de vader van de vermoorde man zijn geld genomen heeft. Nadat de betalingen voor hun diensten aan de rituele werkers verricht zijn worden

beschilderde en bewerkte palen rondom het graf opgericht. Daarmee zijn tien maanden na de geweldadige dood de postbegrafenisrituelen afgesloten. De geest van de dode, die als een bedreiging werd beschouwd, zou niet langer in het dorp rondwaren. Een aantal mensen hebben middels orginele bijdragen, de organisatie van de rituelen of geleverde diensten aan invloed gewonnen. Anderen blijven met hun in een verschuldigde relatie. Dit blijkt vooral uit het optreden van de belangrijkste rituele werker die daar de oudste dochter van de dode met klem op wijst als drie jaar na de dood van haar vader de taboes op diens naam en fotoportret worden opgeheven. Zij staat zozeer bij de man in het krijt dat ze zich al eerder genoodzaakt zag een huwelijksverbintenis met diens zoon aan te gaan. De man dringt daar ook op aan bij een andere dochter van de dode, maar dit strandt op het verzet van haar half-zuster. Beide dochters hadden voorheen een relatie met een blanke man, maar na het verbreken van deze relaties keerden ze terug naar het Tiwi circuit van onderlinge uitwisseling van huwelijkspartners.

Conflicten in de onderhavige samenleving blijken veelal in verband te staan met huwelijkspolitiek, de uitwisseling van partners tussen matriclans (*keramili*). Dit onderliggende patroon komt ook naar voren in een analyse van de beschuldigingen over en weer van Tiwi personen. Een individu maakt deel uit van familieverbanden en netwerken. De beschuldiging van één persoon brengt onmiddelijk ook de belangen van anderen waarmee deze persoon verbonden is in het geding. Beschuldigingen leiden veelal tot tegenbeschuldigingen van een persoon uit de groep of clan(s) waarvan iemand de beschuldiging geuit heeft. Derhalve is het verloop van de gebeurtenissen die uit een conflict voortvloeien nauwelijks voorspelbaar. Oude grieven die weinig met het eigenlijke conflict van doen hebben kunnen te berde worden gebracht en na verloop van tijd een individu's positie ondermijnen. Een opeenstapeling van grieven ten aanzien van een persoon duidt erop dat een conflict uit de hand dreigt te lopen. Indien de betreffende persoon geen stappen onderneemt om tot verzoening te komen of zich uit de voeten maakt om een verdere escalatie te voorkomen, kan het om het leven brengen van die persoon het ultieme middel zijn om het conflict te beslechten.

Deze traditie is terug te voeren op de Tiwi institutie van sluipmoorden (*kwampi*) met behulp van speren welke aan het begin van de twintigste eeuw nog bestond. Opmerkelijk is het betrekkelijk grote aantal slachtoffers van de acties van sluipmoordenaars in de periode voorafgaand aan de kolonisatie, c.q. missionering, van de eilanden. De vestiging van een rooms-katholieke missie en het patrouilleren van een blanke politiemacht bracht een ogenschijnlijke pacificatie tot stand. Geleidelijk vestigden de Tiwi zich in permanente nederzettingen en kwamen zij onder directe supervisie te staan van zogeheten superintendents. De missionarissen poogden sociale hervormingen door te

voeren, waarin zij deels slaagden, en Tiwi gebruiken en rituelen uit te roeien. De afgedwongen naleving van de Australische wet maakte het Tiwi in deze omstandigheden nagenoeg onmogelijk anderen op duidelijk zichtbare wijze van het leven te beroven. Zij grepen naar het middel van de zogenoemde poisonings (waaronder zowel daadwerkelijke vergiftiging als magie wordt verstaan). De daders gaven hun identiteit niet langer prijs en bleven voor de buitenwereld onopgemerkt. In de afgelopen twee decennia, waarin zelfbeschikking van Aborigines een belangrijk oogmerk werd van het overheidsbeleid, volgde een sterke versoepeling van het toezicht op hun dagelijks leven en een tolerantie ten aanzien van hun culturele beleving, waaraan in deze periode openlijk gestalte gegeven werd. De recente moorden met steekwapens lijken hiermee samen te hangen, maar nog steeds zijn de Tiwi onderworpen aan de Australische wet en het is dan ook niet verwonderlijk dat indien mogelijk de daders zich niet bekend maken.

De conflicten waaruit de Tiwi moorden in de betreffende drie perioden voortkwamen zijn niet wezenlijk veranderd. Ondanks de sociale hervormingen in de Tiwi samenleving tot stand gebracht door de rooms-katholieke missie, nominale monogamie in plaats van de eertijdse polygynie, bleef de politiek omtrent de uitwisseling van huwelijkspartners tussen matriclans voortbestaan. De ideologie verbonden met de sociale organisatie van de Tiwi staat nogal eens op gespannen voet met de praktijk: zo zijn er in tegenstelling tot het beginsel van wederkerigheid onevenwichtigheden in de uitwisseling van partners, onder meer omdat deze doorgaans ongelijkmatig over de clans verdeeld zijn; worden (classificatorische) broers geacht samen te werken maar zijn zij tegelijkertijd elkaars grootste concurrenten daar ze hun huwelijkspartners zoeken in dezelfde categorie van vrouwen; en naast een formeel systeem van huwelijksrelaties bestaat er een informeel systeem van de uitwisseling van geliefden dat in potentie de formeel gearrangeerde huwelijken kan ondermijnen. In de casus speelden alle drie genoemde contradicties een rol.

De Tiwi rituelen hebben een sterk narratieve inslag. Dat komt ook tot uitdrukking in de sociale en politieke aspecten aan die rituelen. Uit de boodschappen die vervat zijn in de door de deelnemers voor elke gelegenheid speciaal gemaakte liederen blijkt hoezeer de rituelen ingebed zijn in lopende sociale processen en als zodanig geanalyseerd dienen te worden. De verwikkelingen rond de gewelddadige dood van een Tiwi man gaven zaken van importantie als het ware uitvergroot weer en verschaften zo een toegankelijk beeld van de vitaliteit en dynamiek van de hedendaagse Tiwi cultuur en samenleving.

CURRICULUM VITÆ

Eric Venbrux werd op 5 maart 1960 geboren in Beugen (gemeente Boxmeer). Hij behaalde het diploma ongedeeld VWO in 1980. In hetzelfde jaar begon hij met de studie culturele en sociale antropologie aan de Katholieke Universiteit van Nijmegen.

Zijn eerste veldwerk betreffende de ontwikkelingsgang van een religieuze groepering had in Nederland plaats en vormde de basis van zijn kandidaatsscriptie. Vervolgens deed hij onderzoek naar collectieve voorstellingen rond de dood in een Zwitsers bergdorp, hetgeen resulteerde in een doctoraalscriptie en een aantal artikelen. In de doctoraalfase was hij tevens gedurende drie academische jaren werkzaam als student-assistent, voornamelijk ten behoeve van het onderwijs in de methoden en technieken van antropologisch onderzoek. Medio 1987 studeerde hij af in de antropologie met als bijvakken Etniciteit en interetnische relaties en Middeleeuwse geschiedenis.

Aan het eind van dat jaar volgde een aanstelling als assistent in opleiding bij de eerder genoemde vakgroep om onderzoek te doen naar cultureel bepaalde gedragingen rond de dood bij Australische Aborigines. In het kader hiervan verbleef hij bijna twee jaar in Australië, waarvan zestien maanden bij de Tiwi Aborigines op Melville eiland en Bathurst eiland. Een tentoonstelling in het Nijmeegs Volkenkundig Museum in 1991 maakte deel uit van de verslaglegging van dit onderzoek. Venbrux is geaffilieerd met het Centre for Pacific Studies in Nijmegen. Hij bereidt een nieuw onderzoek in noord-Australië voor.

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